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# **The impact of active service on the intimate relationships of ex-servicemen**

## **An existential-phenomenological study**

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the Doctorate in  
Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy by Professional Studies



New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling, London

Validated by the University of Middlesex

By Susan Iacovou

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## Summary and Abstract

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	Degree validated by Middlesex University
Degree Sought	Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the Degree of Doctorate in Existential Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy
Title of Thesis	How do ex-servicemen describe the impact of active service on their intimate relationships: An existential- phenomenological study

**Abstract:** This research investigates the impact of active service on the intimate relationships of ex-servicemen. The participants are all ex Royal Navy personnel who saw active service during the Falklands War in 1982. There are no other studies looking at this topic from the point of view of Falklands War veterans. Nine men aged 51 to 73 took part in the study, which was conducted and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Three meta-themes and ten themes emerged from the analysis, and illustrate the psychological journey undertaken by the participants, and the relationship issues they faced, following active service. The findings show that active service confronted the

participants with the existential givens of existence, including death, freedom and finitude, and meaninglessness and absurdity. This confrontation shattered their worldviews, changing them and their priorities, and creating overwhelming emotions that they struggled to understand. Unable or unwilling to share their experiences, and feeling alienated from the world around them, most of the participants withdrew from their partners and isolated themselves emotionally and physically. After struggling for many years to cope with and understand the impact of active service on their way of being in the world and on their relationships, six of the participants broke down, with five of them receiving a formal diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The study adds to the existing medical model of PTSD by proposing that a confrontation with existential givens is a mediator between active service and posttraumatic stress (and posttraumatic growth). By reevaluating the symptoms of PTSD within an existential framework the study offers an Existential Counselling Psychology framework for understanding posttraumatic stress.



## **PTSD**

Decades later, there are days when it is forgotten,  
until some flickering image or incoherent sound  
commands an unwanted replay of the old news,  
recreating those images of family flashing past  
preceding playback of combat that destroys my peace.

Then, violent shadows of lonely death haunt me.  
The winged missiles that seek out ships,  
bring the rage of fire, flood and smoke -  
backdrop for the cries of wounded men,  
and the quiet of sudden death.

The silvery screening of those tiny airplanes, searching  
for my ship, my fellow seafarers, transfixes me.  
Sweat glistens, body hair stands up, I'm holding my breath.  
Honey, she says, leaning across the settee,  
Come back, talk to me – please.  
So many years on,  
and my silent, lost comrades will not let me speak.

*By Nicholas Lutwyche (Falklands War Veteran and Poet)*

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## An Existential-Phenomenological Study

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This research would not have been possible without the encouragement and support from those at the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling – staff and fellow travellers on the Doctorate in Counselling Psychology - who have provided inspiration, challenge and camaraderie along the way. Particular thanks are due to Professor Emmy van Deurzen, whose vision resulted in the creation of the New School and the educational programme that in so many ways has set me free. Thanks also to a truly saintly supervisor – Dr Chloe Paidoussis – I have lost count of the number of times you had to rescue me from despair, and this thesis from the dustbin, and a great deal of credit for this research belongs to you. My youngest son informed me recently that I was a nightmare to live with while writing up this report and that I ought to thank him and his two brothers for putting up with me – so here it is Peter, Ruaridh and Ioannos - thank you! I need also to acknowledge and thank the original inspiration for this research, my husband Stephen, a Royal Navy and Falklands War veteran with his own story to tell.

In the end, however, the real credit for this work belongs to the ten ex-servicemen of the Royal Navy who so generously gave of their time and patiently led me through their incredible personal journeys. I have nothing but the deepest respect for each and every one of them. For what it's worth guys, this is for you....

*Lest we forget.* (Rudyard Kipling, Ode of Remembrance, 1897)

# The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen

## An Existential-Phenomenological Study

### **Statement of Authorship**

This dissertation was written by Susan Iacovou and has ethical clearance from the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling and the Psychology Department of Middlesex University. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling and the Psychology Department of Middlesex University for the Degree of Doctorate in Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy. This work is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated, and has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree. The author has no conflicts of interest to report.

# The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen

## An Existential-Phenomenological Study

### 1. Introduction

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 1982, 3000 members of Argentina's Special Forces invaded the Falkland Islands, capturing the capital Port Stanley. General Galtieri the leader of the military junta in Argentina faced an economic crisis and, buoyed by a general belief in the population that Argentina were the rightful owners of the islands, he saw the invasion as a way to bolster support. In the UK, Margaret Thatcher also faced economic woes. Public criticism and open rebellion in parliament threatened when she decided to take a gamble by sending a task force 8000 miles away to reclaim the islands inhabited by 1,800 islanders of British heritage, setting the scene for a 10 week conflict that would cost the lives of 655 Argentinian and 255 British Servicemen along with three Falkland Islanders.

This international conflict, taking place more than three decades ago, also set the scene for this research, looking at the impact of active service on the intimate relationships of ex-servicemen. At the time of the Falklands War, I was only 17 and had just been accepted to study psychology at the University of Edinburgh. My future husband, on the other hand, was 27 years old and, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 1982, was Officer of the Watch on the bridge of HMS Sheffield when he spotted what was later identified as an Exocet missile heading towards the ship. On a day when the British Navy lost its first ship since World War II, he lost 20 of his shipmates. An additional five warships were sunk during the war, along with a number from the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Merchant Navy fleet.

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Twenty eight years later, my husband's matter of fact descriptions of his experiences were less of an influence in my choice of research topic than my work as a relationship therapist on the British Military bases in Cyprus. Working with military personnel, many of whom had seen active service in Iraq and Afghanistan, piqued my curiosity about the possible impact such service might have on their intimate relationships. When the time came to seek participants for my research, I cast the net widely therefore, expecting to recruit participants from different branches of the services and with active service experience from a range of different wars. In the event, however, the men who came forward were almost entirely Ex Royal Naval servicemen with active service experience in the Falklands.

These Royal Navy servicemen returned from the Falklands War to a very different social, medical and military environment than exists today. The concept of PTSD was a relatively new one – having been defined within the DSM-III (APA, 2008) just two years earlier. The 'stiff upper lip' was still a key element of British cultural identity, and this was reflected in a society that valued emotional restraint and remained uncomfortable with the open venting of feelings. The shift towards a preoccupation with trauma and the traumatised (Jones and Wessley, 2005) that was to characterize the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century had not yet taken place. The idea that human beings could be 'traumatised' by events in which they perceived their lives to be at risk was neither widely accepted or understood in the medical profession, and certainly wasn't part of common cultural understanding.

## The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen An Existential-Phenomenological Study

Servicemen returning from the Falklands War, therefore, had no way to explain or make sense of the impact active service had upon their way of being in the world. They returned to a society that was largely oblivious to the psychological impact of combat (despite, as we will see later in this report, it being the subject of commentary from the beginning of recorded history). What's more, they returned to families and to partners who neither expected, nor knew how to respond to, the changes they saw in their sons/ husbands/ boyfriends.

Today UK and the US veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan go through standardized programmes to '*reacclimatize themselves to peace*' (Penk et al, 2011, p173) and aid their transition home (Dao, 2010). In 1982, however, no such provisions were made. In some ways the welcome home for Falklands' Veterans (particularly those who came home without their ships) was far more like that received by veterans from the Vietnam or Korean War era.

Since 2001, when the war in Afghanistan started, over 2.5 million US service personnel and nearly a quarter of a million UK Service personnel have seen service in Afghanistan or Iraq (MoD, 2014). As a result, the past five years have seen a dramatic increase in press coverage of the physical and psychological impact of combat on those who see active service. The visibility of military veteran charities like Combat Stress and Veterans UK, and raised public awareness of the possible impact of active service on the physical and mental health of current and ex-servicemen and women has resulted in increased research output on this topic. The majority of this is quantitative in nature/US based, however. In addition, very little research exists that looks at the impact of

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active service on the intimate relationships of ex-servicemen, and nothing that seeks to answer this question from an Existential-Phenomenological Counselling Psychology paradigm.

The question addressed by this research is '*The impact of active service on the intimate relationships of ex-servicemen*'. My aim is to develop an understanding of how ex-servicemen feel that their experience/s of active service has impacted upon their relationships with their partners. This will include an exploration of if, and how, participants' sense of meaning, values, beliefs and behaviours are changed by their experiences, and if, or how, these changes affect their relationships.

While qualitative research has been said to lack the generalizability of quantitative methodologies (Flick, 2009; Willig, 2013), I very much hope that some common themes in relation to the impact of active service on the military relationships will emerge, which can inform clinical practice with ex-service personnel and potentially form the basis of further qualitative and quantitative research in the future.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter offers a critical evaluation of the main literature investigating the impact of active service on the relationships of military personnel. It includes papers that were published up to and including the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2015 and therefore provides a contemporaneous summary of literature in this field. The literature review was carried out using a range of broad search terms including, but not limited to, the following:

- Military relationships
- Army/Navy/Air Force relationships
- Relationships combat
- Relationships PTSD
- Relationships military existential
- Wives military
- Spouses military
- Marriage military
- Marriage PTSD
- Falklands War relationships
- Marriage combat
- Divorce combat
- PTSD divorce
- Falklands war veterans
- Veterans anger
- Ex-servicemen relationships

The literature review was, in the main, carried out after the collection and analysis of data, so as to enable me to approach the interviews and subsequent analysis with a more open and curious stance (as is appropriate for studies using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith et al, 2009)). The results of the analysis therefore influenced (though did not limit) the literature search, rather than the other way round. As a consequence, my literature review is broad ranging, reflecting the rich and descriptive themes that emerged from the analysis. Literature selected for inclusion in the review comes mainly from



## The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen An Existential-Phenomenological Study

academic peer reviewed journals, though some books are also included where they are of particular relevance and are based upon credible research (for example, see Jones 1995a). The review is structured as follows:

- In order to position my research in a historical context, the literature review starts with an introduction to the impact of active service on military combatants and how this has been perceived through the ages.
- I then outline the small amount of research I was able to find that looks at the psychological impact of war on veterans of the Falklands War.
- Next I examine research measuring the impact of active service on intimate relationships.
- The impact of PTSD on intimate relationships is then explored both within the general and the military populations.
- Additional research on specific symptoms of trauma/trauma related behaviours – alcohol misuse/abuse, anger and violence – and their impact on relationships in general and in military settings is outlined.
- Finally, given the mediating role PTSD appears to play between combat and its impact on intimate relationships, I examine two models of psychotherapeutic treatment of PTSD – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Existential Therapy - and their use in military settings.

I conclude the chapter with a brief discussion of the limitations of the research to date in order to elucidate the position of my research within the current literature and reaffirm the rationale and potential value of my research.

## 2.2 The Terminology of Military Research

There are a number of terms in the research literature that are used in an inconsistent way and which I would like to clarify.

Firstly, the terms *active service* and *deployment* are used to indicate periods of time when a member of the military is working away from their home base, usually in a country or region where there is, or has been, a war or hostilities. Depending on the study, these terms may indicate that participants had a combat role or may not distinguish between participants with combat and non-combat roles. The distinction between deployment in a non-combat role and deployment in a combat role is an important one as, for example, some research suggests that differences in levels of PTSD in US versus UK veterans of Iraq and/or Afghanistan may be accounted for by the fact that US studies often focus on combat infantry units while studies of UK military tend to call upon the total deployed population (Sundin et al, 2014; Kok et al, 2012). My study focuses on *active service*, meaning deployment *in a combat role*. All of my participants were involved in combat and so for them, active service and combat are synonymous. Where studies use the term deployment, I have tried, where possible, to make it clear whether the participants in that research were in combat or non-combat facing roles.

The terms *veteran* and *ex-serviceman* are also used in a potentially confusing way in the research literature. Some studies use the term *veteran* to mean someone who previously served in the military but is no longer serving. Others use the

## The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen An Existential-Phenomenological Study

term to describe people who are veterans of particular wars (such as the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan) but may or may not still be serving military personnel.

Where possible I have used the term *veteran* in the former sense, and have used the term *ex-serviceman* to describe those who are no longer serving in the armed forces. This is consistent with research by Burdett et al (2012), which found that around 50% of the ex-service personnel interviewed did not identify with the term veteran.

Finally, please note that my study and the vast majority of the studies included in this literature review related to service *men* (serving or ex) and not women, hence the use of the masculine term throughout.

### **2.3 The Psychological Impact of War on Combatants – a Historical Review**

The potentially devastating psychological effects of war on those who fight them has been the subject of writings since the beginning of recorded history. Even the bible (Deuteronomy 20: 1-9) reminds us that sometimes soldiers are incapable of staying on the front line because of psychological breakdown (Crocq & Crocq, 2000):

*When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou....the officers shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearded? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethern's heart faint as well as his heart. (King James Version)*

## The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen An Existential-Phenomenological Study

Herodotus (484-425 BC) described a warrior from the battle of Marathon who observed his compatriot being killed by the enemy and immediately became blind '*without blow of sword or dart*' (Waterfield, 2008).

Three thousand years ago, an Egyptian combat veteran named Hori wrote about the feelings he experienced before going into battle:

*You determine to go forward. . . . Shuddering seizes you, the hair on your head stands on end, your soul lies in your hand.* (Hori, 1285-1195 BC)

The *Anglo Saxon Chronicle* recounts a battle in 1003 A.D. between the English and the Danes in which the English commander Alfred reportedly became so violently ill that he began to vomit and was not able to lead his men.

Ancient Greek, Hippocrates (460-370 BC), described terrifying dreams of battle and Lucretius' poem - *De Rerum Natura* - written in 50 BC, vividly represents what the medical profession would today call 're-experiencing' (DSM-5, 2013):

*The minds of mortals... often in sleep will do and dare the same... Kings take the towns by storm, succumb to capture, battle on the field, raise a wild cry as if their throats were cut even then and there. And many wrestle on and groan with pains, and fill all regions round with mighty cries and wild, as if then gnawed by fangs of panther or of lion fierce.* (Leonard, 2004, trans.)

Over the years there have been a range of terms used to describe the psychological impact of war on combatants. Swiss villagers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century who came down with unexplained physical and psychological symptoms after

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being conscripted were described as having '*Swiss disease*' (Jones, 1995).

German doctors around the same time described a condition they called '*heimweh*' (homesickness) that, as the name suggests, they thought originated in soldiers missing home. The Spanish talked about '*estar roto*' meaning 'to be broken' (Bentley, 1991) and the French described '*vent du boulet*' syndrome, where soldiers were frightened by the sound of the rush of wind created by the passage of a cannonball (Crocq & Crocq, 2000).

As well as becoming part of common parlance, the phenomenon attracted some attention amongst members of the medical profession. Eighteenth century psychiatrist Pinel (1745-1826), based on his experiences of working with patients from the wars of the French Revolution, coined the term '*cardiorespiratory neurosis*' to describe the psychological symptoms he observed. During the American Civil War, physician Dr J.M. Da Costa (1871), writing in the American Journal of Medical Sciences, described something that sounds very like what we now call PTSD, which he called '*irritable heart*'. Crocq and Crocq (2000) suggest that it wasn't until the Russian-Japanese war of (1904-1905), however, that post battle psychiatric symptoms were recognized formally by both doctors and those in military command.

In 1914, right at the start of WWI, reports started to emerge of '*battle hypnosis*' (Milan, 1915) in troops retreating following the battle of the Mons, something that, by the end of the war, would be described as '*shell shock*' (Merskey, 1995). At this point the debate began in earnest around the etiology of this phenomenon, and in particular whether it originated in the brain/body or in the

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psyche. Both Freud (1856-1939) and Krapelin (1856-1926) contributed to this debate, with the former taking a more sympathetic stance than the latter, who felt there was an element of malingering going on with many sufferers. In addition to the malingering hypothesis, there were two other suggested explanations - the first was around the possibility of brain injuries or nerve strain, while the second focused on psychological trauma caused by the extreme fright of war. Ultimately, shell shock and its treatment established the credibility of psychological medicine in the UK and resulted in what one commentator has called '*the maturation of psychiatry*' (Merskey, 1991, p261).

Despite the observations of many medical professionals during and in the years following World War I, the UK armed services were unprepared for the psychiatric casualties of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Winston Churchill did not value or encourage the involvement of psychiatrists or psychologists on the front lines, stating in a 1942 correspondence that it was '*very wrong to disturb large numbers of healthy normal men and women by asking the kind of odd questions in which the psychiatrists specialise*' (Churchill, 1942, Memorandum to War Council). Things were not much different in the US Forces, whose command had been heavily influenced by the guidance of psychoanalyst Harry Stack Sullivan, who believed that potential psychiatric casualties could be screened out before they were sent to war (Jones, 1995). Over one million potential recruits were screened out in this way. The US authorities were therefore somewhat puzzled by the large numbers of casualties caused by psychiatric trauma. Researchers studying psychiatric casualties in allied troops variously described the

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symptoms they observed as '*operational fatigue*' (Grinker et al, 1946a), '*traumatic war neurosis*' (Kardiner & Spiegel, 1947) and '*combat exhaustion*' (Swan, 1949).

*Fear is a disease, a pervading terrible thing. If you should ask Bob what he is afraid of, he couldn't tell you. Fear of injury? Of capture? Of death? Probably somewhat, but not really, it is a nameless haunting state of mind, which shackles and cripples a man, and changes his entire integrity as an individual. He is as beaten as if by one of Hitler's rubber hoses.* (Swan, 1949, extract from letter)

Much of the post WWII research focused on trying to identify the etiology of the phenomenon by widening the research questions to veterans to include their home life before the military and their adjustment levels as well as their combat experiences (Grinker et al, 1946b, Swank, 1949; Brill and Beebe, 1952). Some preliminary evidence of the relevance of individual's pre-military personalities or anxieties to their susceptibility began to emerge from these studies (Schnur, 1991).

These studies were overshadowed from the start of the 1960s by a growing body of research focusing on American veterans of the Vietnam War. This research of what was at first described as '*post-Vietnam syndrome*' (Moore & Penk, 2011) would prove to be the impetus behind the classification of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a psychiatric illness. While levels of psychiatric casualties *during* the war were relatively low (less than 5% of casualties were put in this

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category (Jones, 1995a)), and the war was at the time considered a psychiatric success (Jones & Wessely, 2005), it quickly became clear that delayed and chronic posttraumatic symptoms affected many veterans of this war (Kulka et al, 1990). The National Vietnam Veterans' Readjustment Survey (NVVRS) in 1990 (Kulka et al, 1990) found that 15% of male Vietnam veterans met the DSM III criteria for PTSD, though those with war zone exposure had rates of over 35%. These rates compare with overall lifetime prevalence rates in the general population of 7.8-9.5% (Breslau, et al, 1991; Kessler et al, 1995)). In addition, lifetime prevalence rates for PTSD in this group were almost 31%. Rates for partial PTSD, where individuals exhibited some but not all of the symptoms, were 11% at the time of study, with a lifetime prevalence rate of 22.5%. Schnurr et al (2003) later reanalysed this data and found that a staggering 80% of veterans from the Vietnam War reported symptoms of PTSD at that point. Political pressure to classify and treat the symptoms of the disorder, which left so many Vietnam veterans struggling on their return home, led directly to the adoption of the current term '*Posttraumatic Stress Disorder*' (PTSD) and its incorporation into the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-3) (Keane, 2009).

The diagnostic criteria for PTSD have been revised since its original inclusion in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (APA, 2008), largely in light of the additional research that has taken place amongst veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the DSM-5 (APA, 2013), PTSD is defined as occurring after an individual is directly exposed to or witnesses, death,



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threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence, or learns that a close relative or close friend was exposed to trauma, or is subject to repeated and extreme indirect exposure to aversive details of the events. There are four main categories of symptoms: intrusion symptoms, avoidance, negative alterations in cognitions and mood, alterations in arousal and reactivity. For a diagnosis to be made, one symptom from each of the first two categories and two from the second two categories must be present for at least a month and need to be causing significant symptom related distress or functional impairment. There is also a new category of dissociative PTSD where individuals, in addition to the symptoms above, experience high levels of either depersonalization or derealization. (For full diagnostic criteria, see Appendix 1).

### **2.4 The Psychological Impact of War on Veterans on the Falklands War**

Following its incorporation in psychiatric diagnostic manuals, there was a great deal of research into the phenomenon of PTSD in ex-servicemen from a wide range of wars including the Portugese Colonial Wars (Ferraão & Oliveira, 2015), the war in Rwanda (Harbertson, et al 2013) and the Balkan Wars (Hasanović & Pajeciv, 2010). However very little research exists into PTSD in veterans of the Falklands War. A search in EBSCO on Falklands War and PTSD produced 14 hits, of which only five were relevant to this study (three of the others were in Spanish and the remainder were commentaries rather than research papers). Searching on other research engines did not provide any additional papers. It

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seems there are more papers on the media coverage of the War (it was the first War in which the UK was involved that included embedded reporters) than there are on the impact it had on its veterans.

The Falklands War of 1982 lasted only 74 days but resulted in the loss of 237 UK military personnel with 777 wounded and 446 requiring significant hospital treatment (Jones & Wessley, 2005). As stated above, the psychological consequences of this war have largely been neglected by researchers, perhaps because initial reports indicated that no more than 2% of all casualties were psychiatric (Price, 1984). Even later research that indicated the figure was closer to 8% (Abraham in Jones & Wessley, 2005) still suggested that the war was a '*psychiatric success*' (Jones & Wessley, 2005, p136) compared to the US experiences in Korea and Vietnam. Price (2007) speculated that this was due partly to immediate availability of support on hospital ships in combat, and the impossibility of evacuating casualties from the island that kept the figures down in the way that treating casualties of shell shock close to the front lines did in the First World War (Jones & Wessley, 2001). O'Connell (1985) suggested that the two week trans-Atlantic journey gave personnel the chance to prepare (though psychiatric casualty rates amongst Argentinian servicemen were also low (Jones, 1995) and they did not benefit from this preparation time). Finally, a paper by Summerfield and Hume (1993) speculated that the societal context at the time allowed even those with symptoms of trauma to function effectively.

Other authors have suggested, however, that the Falklands War was disproportionately traumatic (Quiroga & Seear, 2009). This view was and

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continues to be perpetuated by a great deal of popular media coverage stating that suicide rates in veterans of the Falklands War are higher than the number of deaths during the war itself (see for example

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-94492/Suicide-Falklands-veterans.html>, 2015). This hypothesis is supported by some research (e.g.

Spooner, 2002) but was recently disproved by research by Holmes et al (2013), indicating that Falklands veterans are less likely than males in the general population to commit suicide. Some studies suggest increased deaths in veteran groups due to accidents that may in fact be suicides (Sher, 2009; Sher et al, 2012), though they may be a result of increased risky behavior in those who see active service, as indicated in some studies (Fear et al, 2008; Thomsen et al, 2011; Thandi et al, 2015).

What can be agreed upon is that Falkland's veterans were the first UK veterans to have their psychological responses to combat considered under a medical, diagnostic framework.

Between 1986 and 1989, Orner et al (1992) studied 53 Falklands War veterans from a mix of services (RAF, Royal Navy and Army) who had left the armed forces and found that 32 of them met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD. They also found a correlation between PTSD and physical injury. A study by O'Brian & Hughes (1991) compared 64 Falklands War veterans (aged 23–42) who were still serving in the British Army with a group of matched controls and found that half of the group reported at least some symptoms of PTSD, and 22% met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD. They also found that the intensity of combat

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experience, and participants' reporting emotional difficulties on return from the war, were positively associated with the experience of PTSD symptoms. Rather prophetically perhaps, Orner et al (1992) concluded that their findings indicated that if Falklands War veterans were not followed up, early measures of psychiatric casualty rates could prove to be greatly underestimated.

A 2007 qualitative study by Burnell et al used thematic analysis to examine the impact perceptions of social support had on four Royal Marines' ability to reconcile traumatic memories. They found that sharing traumatic memories with comrades was not encouraged by military culture and was limited to the journey back and anniversaries of the conflict. They also found that family support was limited to general support and that participants dealt with traumatic memories through avoidance. Burnell et al (2007) also pointed out that the kind of societal support that was available to WWII veterans (where society had effectively been at war and therefore was more empathic and supportive) was not available to the Falklands veterans and that correspondingly they didn't see themselves as equivalent to WWII veterans or worthy of such respect.

McMillan and Rachman (1987) compared the stress reactions of decorated and non-decorated paratrooper veterans of the Falklands, suggesting in their conclusions that the lack of difference and low levels of cardiac response and self-reported fear in both groups indicated these individuals justified their description as '*fearless*' (p375).

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In support of these findings, Jones and Lovett (1987) in a small study of Welsh veterans of the war found that acute psychiatric reactions to the war were rare and reported only three cases of what they called delayed reaction.

My literature search did not uncover any research looking at the impact of active service on the intimate relationships of ex-servicemen from the Falklands War, confirming the potential of the current study to add to existing academic knowledge in this area. It is therefore necessary to draw on research relating to other wars in order to establish a solid academic understanding of the possible impact of active service on intimate relationships.

### **2.5 The Impact of Active Service on Intimate Relationships**

A substantial body of research indicates that military personnel are more likely than members of the general population to be married (Cardigan, 2000; Karney et al, 2012). There is also research to show that military personnel tend to get married younger (Lundquist, 2008; Hogan & Seifert, 2010). It is a common perception that the relationships of military personnel are less stable and more prone to breakup because of the challenges of military life (Burland & Lundquist, 2013). And yet research on divorce rates in the military (McCone & O'Donnell, 2006; Karney & Crown, 2007) generally indicates that they are similar to, or lower, than those in the general population. Other research, such as that by Lundquist (2008) and Hogan and Seifert (2010) has found that military personnel (particularly those below the rank of commissioned officer or those who married young) are more likely to divorce than comparable civilians, even

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after controlling for demographic, religious, socioeconomic, and attitudinal factors. Adler-Beader et al (2006) point out that most research doesn't track remarriage - second or further marriages – and that their research, which does track these figures, indicates higher divorce rates in the military than in the general population. My study, looking not just at first and subsequent marriages in ex military personnel but also at their relationship histories as a whole, is positioned to address a significant gap in the research therefore.

It has long been recognized that military life places unique demands on the intimate relationships of military personnel (Ursano et al. 1987; Martin & Ickovics, 1987; Jarvis, 2011; Schumm, Nazarinia Roy, & Theodore, 2012; Orthner & Rose, 2009). Much of the research to date focuses on the impact of separation/deployment on military relationships (Segal, 1986, Karney & Crown, 2007, Newby et al, 2005; Schumm et al, 2000; McLeland et al, 2008), the culture of the military, which encourages collectivism and a highly masculine and resilient identity on the part of it's members (Keeling, 2014; Christian et al, 2009; Green et al, 2010) or on the impact of military life on partners left at home (Dandeker et al, 2006; Mansfield et al, 2010; Wheeler & Torres Stone, 2010).

There is very little research that focuses on the impact of military life on relationships from the military person's perspective and most of the research that does so has been conducted in the United States (Keeling, 2014).

Ruger et al (2002) carried out a hazard rate analysis looking at marital duration in 3,800 male veterans from WWII, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. They

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found that combat increased the hazard rate for marriages ending by over 60%. The study relied on self-reporting of combat exposure and only considered first marriages.

Gimbel and Booth (1994) carried out research with Vietnam veterans using retrospective questionnaires. Although they found that combat experience was positively associated with marital problems, it was not a direct association but was in fact mediated by adult anti-social behavior (fighting, being arrested, having a house repossessed) and stress symptoms.

A large-scale study by the US Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (Hoge et al, 2007) collated the responses of over 25,000 soldiers who had experienced combat in Iraq and/or Afghanistan. Respondents were asked a wide range of questions about their combat experiences, mental health, deployment stressors and family functioning and were surveyed anonymously before they went on deployment and on return, at three, six and twelve month intervals. The survey found that deployment to Iraq was associated with reduced marital satisfaction and increases in intentions to divorce and with Intimate Partner Violence (IPV).

Finally, research by Newby et al (2005) indicated that some married personnel reported improvements and others reported deterioration in their marital relationship post deployment. Newby's research was with currently serving Army personnel who had been deployed to Bosnia. The 951 participants in this study were all US Army personnel in Bosnia on a peace keeping mission e.g. they did not see combat. The generalizability of the study therefore has to be

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questioned, as does its relevance to the issue of the impact of combat on intimate relationships. The study used self-report questionnaires and categorization of positive and negative comments was inferred by the researcher rather than being selected as positive or negative by the participants.

Despite these design limitations Newby et al's (2005) research is an important reminder of the growing body of research that indicates that, in addition to negative consequences, some military personnel report positive outcomes from their experiences of deployment and war (Sledge, et al, 1980; Afflect & Tennen, 1996; Singer, 1981; Tsai et al, 2015). This phenomenon is commonly termed post-traumatic growth (PTG) (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; Jayawickreme & Blackie, 2014).

Tsai et al's (2015) study of 3157 US veterans looked at post-traumatic growth over a two year period and found that it was prevalent in this group – 50.1% of all veterans and 72% of veterans who screened positively for PTSD had at least moderate levels of PTG. Perhaps it is not surprising that those who had experienced PTSD had the highest level of PTG. Those who had PTSD but no PTG had poorer mental health than those who had PTSD and PTG. This may offer support for Nietzsche's (2012, p3) overused yet valid aphorism '*what does not kill me, strengthens me*', pointing us back to the opportunities offered by adversity.

I was able to identify one study that examined post-traumatic growth in military couples (Wick and Nelson, 2014). Wick and Nelson's qualitative study involved



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forty five male soldiers and their partners who were interviewed using the Couple Adaptation to Traumatic Stress (CATS) model of couples' functioning (Nelson Goff & Smith, 2005). This study found that couples with high posttraumatic symptoms and low relationship satisfaction reported little or no PTG while couples with low levels of posttraumatic symptoms and high levels of relationship satisfaction were able to recognize opportunities for growth in their traumatic experiences. One limitation of this study is that it doesn't look at relationship satisfaction and functioning pre and post deployment and therefore we cannot determine any causal relationships.

As far as I can tell, there are only four studies that specifically examine the impact of deployment and/or combat on UK military personnel's relationships, all of which were with serving military personnel. A mainly qualitative study by Dandeker et al (2006) was the only one to focus specifically on relationships. Two other quantitative studies (Rona et al, 2007; Browne et al, 2007) looked at mental health in military populations and generated some data relevant to relationships as a result, but didn't have intimate relationships as their main concern. Finally, a mixed methods study by Mary Keeling (2014), examined the impact of conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan on the romantic relationships of UK military personnel. All of these studies were carried out with serving personnel.

Dandeker et al's (2006) study looked at the pre, during and post deployment to Iraq experiences of 51 British Army Wives through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. They also collected questionnaire data from the wives and their husbands both during and after deployment. Over 50 percent of the wives felt

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that their husband being in the military negatively impacted on their relationship. Examples of the kind of impacts it had included the husband missing important family events, and emotional stress caused by long separations. Forty seven percent thought military life conflicted with family life, making it difficult to coordinate and plan family life and placing the bulk of responsibility for married and family life on the wives.

Although the biggest source of wives' dissatisfaction with military life was separation from their husbands due to deployment (and pre-deployment training), only 10.8% of husbands and none of the wives thought the deployment had a detrimental effect on their relationship. This may be indicative of the fact that separation has both positive and negative consequences for relationships – giving husbands and wives the space to develop as individuals while also giving them comfort and safety of intimate personal bonds.

Dandeker et al's (2006) study focused primarily on work-life tensions and demands and wives' use of sources of social support. All the participants were drawn from one military service (the Army). The vast majority of the couples involved were living in a garrison town in Germany, and the study didn't differentiate between combat and non-combat roles during deployment. There are question marks, therefore, around how generalizable this study is to wider military populations and how representative it is of military personnel with combat experience. It does support the notion that lengthy deployments (the participants in the study were deployed for six months) may not, in themselves, have a negative impact on military relationships (though other research (Rona et

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al, 2007; Rona et al, 2014) suggests that deployments need to be of 13 months or more before they impact on relationship satisfaction). It was interesting to note that the impact of deployment was evaluated by the wives and their partners in this study, not in isolation, but rather within the context of the overall costs and benefits of military life. Most of the wives had married into the army (e.g. their husbands were in the army when they met) and long separations were seen pragmatically as part of the army life – part of ‘the deal’ almost. It would be interesting to contrast the findings of this research with research with wives whose partners have PTSD or symptoms of trauma following deployment, something that arguably would not have been expected or considered ‘part of the deal’.

Rona et al’s (2007) study compared the mental health of UK military personnel sent to Iraq between January and April 2003 with military personnel who were not sent to Iraq. The study found a robust but small association between deployments of more than 13 months and problems at home, and a consistent association between length of combat and psychological symptoms and severe alcohol problems. Interestingly, they also found that a longer than expected deployment increased the association between deployment and PTSD, with a moderately large effect size in the Royal Navy group. This is noteworthy given the present study involves personnel whose time at sea was significantly lengthened in unexpected circumstances. It is also worth noting that there are very few research studies looking specifically at Royal Navy military personnel, with most focusing on members of the Army.

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The Rona et al (2007) study involved approximately five thousand respondents in both the deployed and the non-deployed group, including representatives of all three Services (the results were broadly similar for all Services). However the purpose of the study was to look at mental health and therefore it doesn't offer us in depth information on, for example, the exact nature of the impact of deployment on relationships.

Rona et al's (2014) follow up study included nearly 4000 personnel who had been deployed in the three years before questionnaire completion. They found that the cumulative length of deployment (of more than 3 years) was associated with pre, during and post deployment problems at home and with relationship or family problems and also with possible PTSD. This large cohort study used self-report questionnaires, which were not anonymous, which may have resulted in under reporting of issues, particularly of PTSD (a phenomenon observed in a previous study by Fear et al, 2012). It offers some support for an association between cumulative length of deployments and relationship problems but, as the authors themselves noted, it is difficult to distinguish the effects of combat from the effects of deployment on relationships because of the link between combat service/exposure to combat and PTSD or other mental health problems.

Browne et al's (2007) study investigated the reasons for excessive mental ill health in reservists and compared regulars and reservists deployed to Iraq. This was a large quantitative study involving nearly 10,000 military personnel and the key finding of relevance to this research is that UK Reserve forces had lower levels of marital satisfaction compared with regulars. This study had a large

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sample group that was representative of all three branches of service. It also included serving and non-serving personnel. However, as it was a cross-sectional study it is impossible to determine the direction of causation for the associations they found.

Finally, Keeling's (2014) PhD Dissertation was a mixed methods study. The first part of the study looked at relationship satisfaction levels of nearly 7,500 currently serving military personnel. Eighty seven percent of those questioned said they were satisfied with their relationship and the majority had not discussed divorce or separation within the last year. A strength of this study is that it looks at relationship *quality* in the military and goes beyond looking merely at marriage and divorce statistics (this is something Karney and Crown (2007) identified as a priority for future research into military relationships). However the study only addresses marital satisfaction at a fixed point in time and only includes serving personnel. The current study addresses the relationships (marriages and intimate relationships that did not lead to marriage) of ex-service personnel over time and hence adds to the current literature base.

Also of relevance to my study was the finding that the associations between combat exposure and discussing separation or family problems were very small (what Keeling (p200) describes as '*borderline significant*'). Deploying for 13 months or more in a three year period was also associated with relationship difficulties. The study therefore provides some limited support for one of its hypotheses - that combat exposure would be related to relationship difficulties.

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Importantly, where the associations between combat exposure and relationship difficulties did exist, the existence of mental health issues mediated them – ‘*so combat exposure is only associated with relationship difficulties indirectly through mental health symptoms*’ (Keeling, 2014, p217). Stronger associations were found between relationship difficulties and lack of family support, financial problems and not enough support from the military for spouse during deployment, than were found between combat or deployment and relationship difficulties.

For the qualitative part of her research, Keeling conducted six interviews with married, male Non Commissioned Officers in the Army, aged 25-34, analysing them using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. She identified five dilemmas that military relationships have to negotiate:

1. *Balancing army and wife* – the challenge of giving time and attention to their partner while also meeting the demands of their role in the military.
2. *Separations create weakness and strength* – dealing with the insecurity created by separation and the need to reconnect following long absences. Adapting and re-establishing roles and routines in the relationship.
3. *Guilt versus alleviating guilt* – feeling guilty for being absent and unable to support their wives emotionally and alleviating this guilt through narratives around their wives being strong and independent women who had made informed choices to marry someone in the military.
4. *Bravado versus emotion* – the use of emotional bravado, identifying as tough, masculine men, to protect themselves and their wives. This bravado was

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seen as essential to continuing in their military career and prevented them being overwhelmed by negative emotion.

5. *Transition from lad's life to married life* – having a period where relationships were not a priority and they lived a lifestyle that wasn't conducive to having committed relationships. Relationships then were a natural progression for them having got the 'lad's life' out of their system.

Four of the six participants in Keeling's (2014) study reported that their military career had a positive impact on their relationships, while two reported it had a negative impact. However all six appeared satisfied with their relationship and none of them had discussed divorce or reported having a relationship or family problem as a result of their most recent deployment.

Clearly the idiographic nature of this study means that the generalizability of the findings should be approached with caution. All the participants were serving military personnel of NCO rank and of similar ages. The extent to which participants had been exposed to combat was not clear and in any case, as Keeling (2014) herself states, the culture of machismo in the military may have affected how honest the participants were with the researcher. However the themes that emerged seem consistent with other research outlined earlier in this literature review and can certainly inform this present study and future research.

It is also worth mentioning a study by Harvey et al (2011) that found that 30% of regular and more than 50% of reserve troops returning from deployment to Iraq

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or Afghanistan felt poorly supported by the military after their return. Many reported that they didn't want to talk about their experiences and that they felt no one understood those experiences. They also found it difficult to return to their normal social activities on their return. Although this study focuses mainly on reserve troops, didn't look at military relationships specifically, and also doesn't allow us to differentiate between combat and non-combat roles, it does indicate that social adjustment problems are common in personnel returning from deployment. It seems reasonable to speculate that these problems may also affect the intimate relationships of the individuals involved.

### **2.6 The Impact of PTSD on Intimate Relationships**

What is clear from many of the studies examined so far in this chapter is that the empirical evidence for a link between deployment and relationship problems in military marriages is '*weak and inconsistent across studies*' Karney and Crown (2007, p53). This may reflect the fact that many studies do not differentiate between combat facing and non-combat facing roles on deployment. It may also be because there is a mediating factor between combat and relationship difficulties, as suggested, for example, in the study by Gimbel & Booth (1994) above.

There is certainly a wealth of research demonstrating the link between mental health issues and relationship difficulties (Dekel & Monson, 2010; Dirkzwager et al., 2005; Ruger et al, 2002) much of which identifies a strong association



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between intimate relationship problems and PTSD symptoms in particular (Taft et al, 2011).

A growing research base supports the hypothesis that the association between combat and relationship outcomes is mediated by PTSD or by symptoms of trauma exposure (Goff, Crow, Reisbig, & Hamilton, 2007). Karney and Crown (2007, p24), for example, suggest that combat can produce what they call '*emergent traits*' in military personnel, such as the development of PTSD symptoms, which then disrupt the communication and connection between the couple (Allen et al, 2010). Renshaw et al (2009) found that PTSD and *not combat exposure* was directly associated with marital satisfaction in their sample of National Guard soldiers returning from Iraq.

Meis et al (2010) suggested that negative emotionality, which is the tendency to react with irritability or anxiety or other negative emotions in response to stress, predisposes combat exposed military personnel to more severe PTSD and therefore in turn results in poorer relationship quality for these individuals. Other research identifies childhood adversity/trauma (Carbrera et al, 2007), low cortisol levels (Yehuda et al, 1996), younger age at point of trauma (King et al, 1996) and personality (Schnurr & Vielhauer, 1999) as possible pre-disposing factors for PTSD in military personnel.

Research by Riggs et al (1998) looked at the relationships of 50 Vietnam veterans and their partners and found that 70% of veterans with PTSD and their partners reported clinically significant levels of relationship distress compared

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to 30% of veterans without PTSD and their partners. The emotional numbing symptoms of PTSD in particular were strongly related to relationship quality. Participants in this study were volunteers and so the levels of PTSD may be overestimated compared to the general population. The generalizability of a small sample of veterans, all from one war, is also unknown. Also this study, like many other studies of this nature, didn't assess levels of comorbid problems faced by veterans with PTSD – such as depression or alcohol abuse - that may also have impacted on relationship quality.

Riggs et al's (1998) research supported earlier research in this area that suggested that combat veterans with PTSD, from a wide variety of wars, were particularly at risk for serious relationship issues (Card, 1987; Carroll et al, 1985; Jordan et al., 1990; Waysman et al, 1993; Cook et al, 2004).

More recently studies involving large cross-sectional analyses of male veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have added to this research base, finding that PTSD symptoms are associated with lower relationship satisfaction and distress on a wide range of measures (Erbes et al, 2011; Erbes, et al, 2012).

Wick and Nelson's (2014) study was one of the few I could find that gathered qualitative data that examined the impact of PTSD on couple functioning in military couples. The study found that couples with the lowest posttraumatic symptoms had the highest relationship satisfaction and vice versa. Relationships in the group with the highest posttraumatic symptoms and the lowest

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relationship satisfaction levels tended to use predominantly closed communication (low levels of information sharing and reciprocity or feedback) and were characterised as 'conflict avoidant' with one or more partners using stonewalling, criticism or physical departure in response to attempts to resolve conflict. This group of couples also tended to have less frequent and more negative interactions generally, were less able to exhibit empathy towards each other and made less effort to affirm or support the other. What is unclear from the study is the direction of causality.

Given that social support is important in the coping with stress in general and combat stress in particular (Keane, et al, 1985; Solomon et al., 1990a; Solomon et al, 1990b), lack of support from an intimate relationship may exacerbate any PTSD symptoms experienced. There may therefore be a circular relationship between PTSD and symptoms of relationship distress (Kaniasty & Norris, 2008; Benotsch et al, 2000). A 2013 study by Balderrama-Durbin et al, carried out with 76 US Air Force personnel deployed to Iraq found that a lack of willingness to disclose combat related experiences significantly predicted concurrent symptoms of PTSD and therefore supports this hypothesis. Further support is lent by studies such as that by Schnur et al (2007) and Monson et al (2008), which found that symptoms of PTSD such as arousal, avoidance and emotional numbing negatively affect the psychosocial functioning of trauma survivors in a number of settings.

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In the following sections I look at other symptoms of trauma that are often exhibited by military personnel and can be comorbid with PTSD and examine their possible impact on the relationships of military personnel.

#### **2.7 Alcohol Abuse and Active Service**

The abuse of alcohol by veterans of active service has been the subject of a great deal of research. This research has shown that alcohol misuse, binge drinking and other alcohol related problems are common in military populations (Fear et al, 2007; Forbes et al, 2011; Pinder et al, 2012) and are more prevalent in post deployment armed forces compared with the general population (Bray et al, 2005; Ramchand et al, 2011).

Ramchand et al (2011) found that combat related traumas and psychological distress (symptoms associated with PTSD) were associated with frequency of drinking behaviours. This supported data emerging from previous studies on this topic (Fear et al, 2010; Jacobson et al, 2008; Browne et al, 2008; McDevitt-Murphy et al, 2010; Wilk et al, 2010).

Hooper et al's (2008) prospective study looked at alcohol and cigarette use in more than 1300 members of the UK armed forces and followed up just under a thousand of those individuals three years later. Not only was alcohol consumption higher in those who had been deployed, the greatest effect was found in those who thought they might be killed or those who experienced hostility from civilians while on deployment. A study by Jacobson et al (2008) included 1200 military personnel (both regular and reserve) and found that

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reserve personnel and younger personnel exposed to combat were at increased risk of new-onset heavy weekly drinking, binge drinking and alcohol related problems.

Rates of self-reported abuse of alcohol are consistently higher in the UK than in the US (Sundin et al, 2014) with some researchers (Browne et al, 2008; Dupreez et al, 2012) suggesting that there is increased tolerance, partly because there is a cultural view in the UK military that alcohol encourages cohesion amongst troops.

Studies in non-military populations show that the negative effects of negative life events are associated with an increase in alcohol misuse, while positive life events are associated with a decrease in these figures (Veenstra et al, 2006; Pieterra & Sloan, 2001).

A recently published longitudinal study (Thandi et al, 2015) assessed risk factors in a random sample of UK military personnel who served in 2003, using AUDIT (the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test). Participants were tested in 2004-2006 and again in 2007-2009, and the impact of changes in mental health status, marital status, rank, deployment and smoking on alcohol use was assessed between these dates. The findings reported decreases in Audit scores were associated with decreases in psychological distress or remission in probable PTSD. New onset symptoms of PTSD or a relationship breakdown were associated with a significant increase in AUDIT scores.

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Studies in the general population show that PTSD and alcohol dependence typically occur together in rates of between 41% and 79% (Pietrzak et al, 2011; Scherrer et al, 2008). Some studies do report much lower figures e.g. Debell et al's (2013) meta-analysis of 42 papers on this topic published between 2007 and 2012, concluded that around 10% of individuals with PTSD have comorbid alcohol abuse. Although the percentages vary between studies, what is clear is that comorbidity of PTSD and alcohol abuse exists in the general population.

In a military population, Gaher et al's (2014) study included 139 soldiers (male and female) aged 18-50 previously deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan and found functional associations between PTSD and alcohol abuse with participants drinking more and experiencing more alcohol related problems when they experienced increased PTSD symptoms. Interestingly lack of emotional clarity and impulse control difficulties mediated the relationship between increased alcohol and PTSD in male participants only. This infers that an inability to name and understand their emotions contributes to increased drinking. Gaher et al's (2014) study is supported by findings emerging from Leeies et al (2010) and Simpson et al's (2012) studies that suggest military personnel with PTSD drink more to help them deal with painful emotions.

A very recent study by Roos et al (2015) offers us an interesting perspective on increased drinking behaviour that is of relevance to my research. They carried out a randomised controlled trial with over 1,700 people receiving treatment for alcohol abuse or dependence, measuring, amongst other things, temptation to drink and purpose in life. They assessed levels of purpose in life in their

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participants using Crumbaugh and Maholick's (1964) Purpose in Life Test, which is based on Frankl's (1978) concept of will to meaning and includes measures of life meaning, life satisfaction and fear of death, and temptation to drink, measured via DiClemente et al's (1994) Alcohol Abstinence Self-Efficacy Scale (AASE). They found that lower purpose in life scores were strongly associated with higher temptation to drink scores and higher purpose in life scores were strongly associated with lower temptation to drink scores. It seems likely that PTSD will have an impact on individual's sense of purpose in life (though I could find no studies using the Purpose in Life Test to support this) and that therefore part of the link between PTSD and increased alcohol consumption could be explained by a loss in life meaning.

These studies suggest that alcohol abuse may serve a wide range of purposes for military personnel with PTSD. It may be used as a coping strategy to alleviate the symptoms of trauma, as a response to feelings of meaningless or even as a response to relationship stress. It is hoped that the findings from this present study may potentially elaborate on the reasons for the co-morbidity of PTSD and alcohol abuse and their impact on relationships.

I was unable to find any studies looking at levels of alcohol abuse with or without PTSD in Falklands War veterans.

## **2.8 Anger, Active Service and PTSD**

Since the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, anger has become more widely recognized as an issue for military personnel who have experienced active service (Gonzalez, et al, 2015; Elbogen et al, 2010).

Maguen et al (2010) found that combat exposure together with killing in combat predicted high levels of anger. Sayer et al (2010) reported 'problems controlling anger' as the most common readjustment problem faced by service personnel on return from active service (this study had a relatively small sample size of 754).

Assessing over 88,000 soldiers returning from Iraq, Milliken et al (2007) reported that concerns about interpersonal conflict increased four-fold when service personnel returned from active service.

The consequences of increased anger are highlighted by Novaco et al (2012) who found it to be associated with impairments in mental health, physical health, and psychosocial functioning, even after controlling for combat exposure, and symptoms of PTSD and depression among 3,528 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. A more recent study by Novaco & Chemtob (2015) found that PTSD was not associated with violence in the absence of anger, suggesting increased attention needs to be given to anger in the assessment of risk factors in military personnel with PTSD.

If, as seems to be indicated, anger is an issue for military personnel returning from active service this could be exacerbated or indeed could be the result of



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PTSD or trauma symptoms. The co-morbidity of anger with PTSD has been the subject of a great deal of research outside of the military setting (Dyer et al, 2009; Olatunji, 2010; Orth & Weiland, 2006). A recent quantitative study by Rona et al (2015) was the first meta-analysis to have sufficient statistical power to show the association in the military population (though this association was posited in earlier meta-analyses by Olatunji et al (2010) & Orth & Weiland (2006)). Orth and Weiland (2006) also found that the effect sizes between PTSD and anger were larger amongst veterans who have seen combat than they are in civilians who have experienced other types of trauma (Elbogen et al, 2011). Although the Rona et al study is an important one, and shows that anger is not an isolated symptom in military populations, it only studied outwardly expressed anger. They suggest that further research work on inwardly felt but suppressed anger and how it is experienced and expressed would be useful.

It is clear from this body of research that anger is not an isolated symptom and clinical practice needs to take into account the wider mental health of individuals who exhibit high levels of anger, particularly as research evidence shows that anger and PTSD together are a strong predictor of poorer PTSD treatment effectiveness and of higher rates of drop out (Forbes et al, 2008) and of violent behavior (Novaco & Chemtob, 2015).

Research with an existential-phenomenological orientation gives us additional insight into the role of anger in trauma. McCormack & McKellar (2015) used Interpretative Phenomenological analysis to conduct a longitudinal case study with a 60 year old male who was injured in the 2005 Bali Bombings. Their

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findings suggested that anger following trauma acted as a facilitator of growth and change, particularly in social relationships, empathy for others and increased personal meaning. This supported similar findings from Park et al (2008) who demonstrated (in a representative sample of over 1000 US citizens) a link between anger towards those who perpetrated the US 9/11 terrorist attacks predicted posttraumatic growth.

### **2.9 Aggression and Violence Following Active Service**

The suggestion that exposure to war could result in the brutalization of those who take part in it has been around for many years (MacManus et al, 2015). Stories of violent and aggressive acts carried out by returning service personnel were a feature of post war narratives following the First World War (Emsley, 2008) and Second World War (Allport, 2009). Scientific research into this phenomenon proliferated following the Vietnam War (see, for example, Lasko, 1994; McFall, 1999), with one researcher (Rosenheck, 1985) identifying what he described as Malignant Post-Vietnam Stress Syndrome as a predictor of explosive violent behaviour. More recently there has been renewed interest in the relationship between active service and violence in the UK and US amid concern in the media in both countries (Caesar, 2010; Alvarey & Frosch, 2009) that there are increased levels of such violence.

A study by Thomas et al (2010) of over 18,000 US soldiers found that 18% of those surveyed reported getting into a fight and hitting someone in the last month. The survey used in this research was not anonymous, which arguably

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may have resulted in under reporting. In addition, like most of the research considered in this review, Thomas et al's (2010) study only included currently serving military personnel.

Gallway et al (2012) found that 22% of the soldiers they surveyed reported punching or hitting someone in the last 12 months, but acknowledge that their sample of soldiers from one base in Colorado may not have been representative of US soldiers as a whole. In the UK, MacManus et al (2012), considering a randomly selected sample of 10,272 military personnel in service at the time of the Iraq war, found that 12.6% of Regulars reported having physically assaulted someone in the week after returning from deployment. The combat role was strongly associated with post deployment violence in this study, though like some other researchers they found that pre-enlistment antisocial behavior was the strongest predictor. This study can be criticized for using a non-anonymised survey and its somewhat imprecise definition of the time period under study.

A further large questionnaire study in the UK (MacManus et al, 2013) included nearly 14,000 currently serving military personnel and again found that a combat role significantly increased the risk of violent offending post combat. This study was unusual in that it used conviction records and so it is likely to have captured the most serious offences but to have under reported offences generally.

A study by Elbogen et al (2010) of 1388 former military personnel drawn from a random sample of over 1 million veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan found that

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over a third reported having behaved violently or aggressively over the last year.

Hellmuth et al (2012) examined aggression amongst 359 US Iraq and Afghanistan combat veterans with mental health issues and found that nearly 32% reported at least one act of physically aggressive behavior in the last four months.

Most recently, MacManus et al's (2015) meta-analysis examined the phenomenon of violence in military and ex-military personnel following the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They included a total of 17 quantitative studies from the US and the UK. MacManus and her colleagues warned that caution is necessary in interpretation of their results because of the different measures of aggression and violence used in the studies, the high levels of sample heterogeneity between them and the use of self-report measures in many of them. Despite these reservations, MacManus et al (2015) concluded that physical violence and aggression was prevalent amongst serving and formerly serving personnel who saw active service in Iraq and/or Afghanistan and suggested that findings of 10% for physical assault and 29% for all types of physical aggression in the past month should be investigated further. As this is one of the few meta-analyses that includes ex-service personnel, it was interesting to note also that MacManus et al (2015) noted that some of the studies they reviewed found similar strengths of associations between combat exposure and violence in ex-serving military personnel as are found in currently serving personnel (Calvert & Hutchinson, 1990; Beckham et al, 1998) while others found only certain types of combat exposure (such as participating in war time violence) (Hiley-Young et al, 1995)

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or pre-military characteristics (Fontana & Rosenheck, 2005; Hartl, et al, 2005) were associated with increased violence in this group.

It seems clear that many studies show an increase in violence amongst military and ex-military personnel who have seen active service. In terms of the current study, it is important to drill down further to find out if this is predominantly stranger violence or Intimate Partner Violence.

### **2.10 Intimate Partner Violence and Active Service**

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a serious national health issue in the US (Marshall et al, 2005) and in the UK (Trevillion et al, 2015) but one that was only recognized in the 1970s and has therefore been somewhat under researched. A number of studies in the US looked at and found a link between combat exposure (as differentiated from deployment) and IPV amongst veterans of the Vietnam War (Yager, 1984; Calvert & Hutchinson, 1990; Beckham et al, 1998).

Sullivan and Elbogen (2014) found, that family directed violence amongst military personnel at 13%, was more common than stranger violence at 9%. This supports an earlier study by Averill (1983) who posited that anger was a highly interpersonal emotion and reported that out of 116 self-reported anger episodes 79% of them happened between people with close emotional ties. Also in this study, high combat exposure strongly predicted severe family violence but not family aggression, which was a lower level of severity. This study used a self-report questionnaire and so may again have underreported the issue.

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Orcutt et al (2003) found that 27.5% of military personnel with PTSD reported past year partner physical violence and a staggeringly high 90% past year psychological violence. However the direction of causality was not clear in this cross sectional study and nor was the definition of psychological violence.

Studies by Hiley-Young et al (1995) on Vietnam veterans, however, did not find a link between exposure to combat and partner violence and later studies on samples drawn from wider conflicts suggest that pre-existing tendencies in military personnel who exhibit such violence towards their partners may be more important than combat exposure (Fontana & Rosenheck, 2005; Hartl, et al, 2005).

A study by Rabenhorst et al (2012) examined spousal abuse rates post-deployment in a sample of 4,874 couples from the US Airforce. They found moderate or severe abuse of wives by husbands was 24% higher after deployment and where alcohol abuse was indicated, the rate was nearly 37% higher. They used objective, record based outcomes, which is a strength of this study but of course also a weakness as it therefore only includes reported incidents.

Sayers et al (2009) found that 54% of veterans with current or recently separated partners reported conflicts involving shouting or pushing in the last year. However they took a small clinical sample of 199 Iraq or Afghanistan veterans reporting for medical evaluation at a clinic in Philadelphia and so this sample was not representative of the US military as a whole.

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The challenge of obtaining information from men who are violent to their partners has been noted by a number of researchers (Coleman, 1980; Hyden 1994). It is perhaps not surprising therefore that I found only one phenomenological study of intimate partner violence from the perspective of the perpetrator in my literature review. Cavanagh et al (2001) interviewed 122 male perpetrators of IPV and concluded that male perpetrators make sense of their violence by blaming their partner and denying their own responsibility. Responsibility and freedom of choice are key existential themes.

### **2.11 Intimate Partner Violence and PTSD**

Given that common mental disorders are found more often in military populations than in the general working population (Goodwin, et al 2015), it is worth noting that the presence of such a disorder increases the odds that an individual will be violent towards their partner (Oram et al, 2015, Reingle et al, 2014, Shorey et al, 2012).

Of particular relevance to this study is the possible link between PTSD and IPV. Hahn et al (2015) looked this link in a sample of nearly 12000 heterosexual men in the general population and found that those with PTSD were more likely to be perpetrators of IPV than those without the diagnosis. This backs up a previous study linking PTSD and IPV (Karr, 2012).

The first meta-analysis of IPV in military populations in the US was carried out by Marshall et al (2005) and found a robust correlation between PTSD and IPV in both serving and ex-serving personnel. This supported previous research that

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demonstrated higher levels of IPV amongst veterans with PTSD than without (Carroll et al, 1985; Jordan et al, 1992) and research by Samper et al (2004) with Vietnam veterans that found a strong correlation between severity of PTSD symptoms and the severity of IPV perpetrated.

Much more recently, a systematic review of domestic violence amongst military populations by Trevillion et al (2015) aimed to establish the levels and odds of IPV amongst military personnel who also had diagnoses of mental disorders. Lack of data prevented them coming to any conclusions on any mental disorders other than PTSD, where they found that 27.5% of military personnel with PTSD who were included in the studies reported that they had perpetuated physical violence against a partner in the last year. Figures for last year psychological violence were a staggering 91%. These studies are of direct relevance to my research, looking at the impact of active service on military relationships, as they suggest that PTSD in military personnel is associated with violent behavior towards intimate partners.

Hahn et al (2015) carried out a large-scale study with over 11,000 veterans to investigate the association between lifetime diagnosis of PTSD and IPV in the general population and found a significantly higher risk of IPV perpetration among those with PTSD.

Most comparative studies of violence and aggression amongst veterans with and without PTSD demonstrate an increased risk of IPV amongst those with PTSD. Lasko et al (1994) assessed levels of self-reported violence in Vietnam combat



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veterans with and without PTSD and found increased levels of aggression in veterans with PTSD as compared to those without, even when they controlled for combat experience. This suggested the violence was a property of PTSD rather than a consequence of military combat. This was a very small study, however (less than 40 participants) and used self-report measures.

Two pieces of research contradict the findings explored so far. Tharp, et al (2014) studied 100 couples where the male was a US veteran of Iraq or Afghanistan and the female was a civilian and found that frequency and pattern of violence in the relationship were not associated with ex-military personnel diagnosis of PTSD. Also looking at ex-military personnel, Bradley (2007) found that the male veterans were less likely to engage in an episode of IPV as compared with civilians who have not experienced active service. These studies are important to my research as they suggest that the link between PTSD and Intimate Partner Violence found in serving military personnel may not exist in ex-service men. Indeed it may offer some support for Novaco & Chemtob's (2015) conclusion that an association between violence and PTSD may actually be mediated by anger (Novaco & Chemtob, 2015).

### **2.12 Posttraumatic Stress and Psychotherapy with Military Personnel – an Introduction**

Since the Falklands War, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have stimulated a great deal of research into the likelihood of troops developing PTSD following

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active service (Hoge & Castro, 2006; Sundin et al, 2010; Richardson et al, 2010). Initial studies in the UK indicated low associations between deployment and PTSD in regular troops, but significant associations in reserve troops (Hotopf et al, 2006). Levels of PTSD in regular troops in the UK estimated at between 3 and 7% (Richardson et al, 2010 and Wells et al, 2011) seemed to contrast with levels of between 5 and 20% in the US (Hoge et al, 2006; Schell et al, 2008). After 2006, however, larger numbers of UK forces were deployed to provinces where intense fighting took place. This, together with the way rates in the US increased with time following deployment (Sundin et al, 2010), provoked further research in the UK that seemed to demonstrate a significant association between PTSD and combat roles in both regular and reserve personnel deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan (Ramchaud, et al, 2010) and a small increase in reporting of probable PTSD as time increased since deployment (Fear et al, 2010).

Greenberg et al's (2011) meta-analysis found rates of between 7 and 30% in UK combat troops. More recently, Sundin et al's (2014) meta-analysis compared the prevalence of post deployment health outcomes including PTSD in both the UK and the US, controlling for variables, finding comparable prevalence levels in UK and US troops exposed to high or low levels of combat.

The high prevalence of PTSD amongst military personnel also stimulated research into an increasingly broad range of treatments for the disorder and its related symptoms (including virtual reality exposure treatment, psychopharmacological treatment, psychodynamic therapy and group therapy

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(Rizzo et al, 2007; Thompson et al, 2008; Roth & Bateson, 1997; Nash et al, 2010)).

Given the fact that a great deal of the research covered in this literature review so far indicates that it is not combat itself, but rather PTSD or trauma related symptoms that impact on the relationships of military personnel, it seems appropriate to research therapeutic models for the treatment of PTSD. It seems likely that for many military personnel affected by PTSD or related symptoms, the alleviation of the effects of trauma and increased understanding of the personal impact of trauma would result in an improvement in their intimate relationships. I have chosen to explore and contrast research on the two broad psychotherapeutic orientations to the treatment of PTSD in this population – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Existential Therapy.

I have chosen to look at CBT because it is the dominant paradigm in the US and UK as far as government endorsed treatments of PTSD are concerned. In the US, guidelines produced by the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS) make Cognitive Behavioural Therapy the psychotherapeutic treatment of choice and this is endorsed by the US Department of Veterans Affairs. In the United Kingdom, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence also recommends CBT and leading charities supporting veterans with PTSD, including Combat Stress and Help for Heroes endorse these approaches.

I have chosen to examine existential therapy and its impact/potential impact in military populations with PTSD because, in contrast to CBT, it is an approach

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underpinned by an idiopathic philosophy. It also concerns itself with the fundamental givens of existence including death and mortality, isolation and relationship, all of which are relevant to the experience of trauma. It is a relatively under researched orientation (Cooper, 2008) adding value to its inclusion in this review.

### **2.13 Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and the Treatment of PTSD in Military Populations**

Broadly speaking, cognitive behavioral treatments attempt to alter maladaptive thought patterns to improve the emotional and behavioral reactions associated with the traumatic experience (Schnurr et al., 2007). The predominant focus of treatment is to reduce trauma-related stress by enhancing the client's awareness of his or her *'negative thoughts and dysfunctional beliefs and to modify them via cognitive restructuring techniques'* (Amstadter et al., 2007, p. 643). Theoretical models of PTSD such as that of Monson et al (2005) speculate that the close relationship between PTSD and relationship distress is accounted for by the fact that the behavioural symptoms of PTSD perpetuate the disorder but also impact on the functioning of intimate relationships. Other research suggests the emotional disturbances such as numbing affect relationship functioning by impairing conflict management and problem solving abilities (Monson et al, 2009).

Two forms of trauma-focused CBT for PTSD – Prolonged Exposure therapy (PE) and Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) - and one based broadly on behavioural

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theories – Eye Movement Desensitization and Regulation (EMDR) – are recommended treatments for PTSD in both the US and the UK (FOA, 2009; NICE Guidelines, 2005). I look at each of these therapies below.

### **2.13.1 Exposure Therapy for PTSD in Military Populations**

Prolonged Exposure therapy utilizes the cognitive behavioural model's concepts of exposure and emotional processing theory (Foa & Kozak, 1986). The rationale behind the model is that fear is a normal adaptive response when faced with danger but that people with PTSD overgeneralize this fear response to situations and experiences that are not dangerous, which they then try to escape or avoid (Peterson et al, 2011). Peterson et al (2011) suggest that two sets of negative cognitions are at the root of the negative emotions involved in PTSD in veterans – 'the world is an extremely dangerous place' and 'I am no longer competent to serve'. Confrontation of the memory and associated triggers is seen as key to recovery and is aided by imaginal exposure (repeated retelling of the story) and in vivo exposure until the individual has a more realistic perspective of the trauma and negative emotions have decreased to the level where they are not debilitating. Existentially, we might suggest that 'angst' (Heidegger, 1962) (existential anxiety emerging from awareness of existential conditions such as mortality) rather than fear of something specific is at the root of PTSD and is actually realistic (after all, death applies to everyone and we cannot choose our time and place of death). This realistic anxiety, it has been speculated (Iacovou, 2011) can be overwhelming, and if not faced, can be transformed into more

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neurotic anxiety. If this is the case, then arguably PET for PTSD will deal only with the overt and symptomatic anxiety and not its underlying ontological cause.

Prolonged Exposure therapy was initially trialed mainly in non-military settings where it proved to be effective. For example, Bradley et al (2005), carried out a meta-analysis of psychotherapy for PTSD between 1980 and 2003 and found PET produced clinically meaningful improvement in patients relative to the control group.

Research exploring the use of PET with combat related PTSD is limited and is mostly case study based with single or small numbers of military personnel (Blount et al, 2014; Cigrang et al 2005). A randomised controlled trial by Schnurr et al (2007) included 300 military personnel (all of whom were female), the majority of whom were treated for PTSD caused by non-combat related trauma. However those treated using Prolonged Exposure Therapy had significantly reduced levels of PTSD symptoms compared to those in a Person Centred control group.

Turek et al (2011) compared treatment outcomes in 111 veterans of the Vietnam, the first Gulf War and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They found that Prolonged Exposure Treatment was associated with significant reductions in symptoms of PTSD for all veterans, regardless of the war in which they served. This was non randomised and didn't assess therapists' compliance with the Prolonged Exposure protocol, though participants were trained in the protocol and received weekly supervision.

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More recently, Foa et al (2013) carried out a single-blind Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) and compared combinations of treatment for alcohol dependency (pharmacological treatment), PTSD (Prolonged Exposure Therapy) and supportive counselling. Patients were randomized to one of four groups: pharmacological treatment and supportive counselling; placebo medication and prolonged exposure therapy; pharmacological treatment, prolonged exposure therapy and supportive counselling; or placebo medication and supportive counselling. PTSD symptoms reduced in each of the intervention groups. Prolonged exposure therapy didn't have a significantly different effect from any other intervention. The study involved 165 participants but nearly a third of participants dropped out before the end of treatment. In addition, all the participants who received Exposure Treatment also received supportive counselling, which may have masked or enhanced the effects of ET.

### **2.13.2 Cognitive Processing Therapy for PTSD in Military Populations**

Cognitive processing therapy (CPT) is based on components of information processing and social schema theories (McCann et al, 1988) and posits that PTSD is caused by false beliefs about the causes and consequences of traumatic experiences, which then produce negative emotions and prevent the individual from accurately processing the trauma. According to this model, avoidance behaviours, core to PTSD, also interfere with recovery by limiting the opportunities people have to develop more accurate beliefs about the trauma (Resick & Schnicke, 1993; Resick et al, 2008). As an Existential Counselling Psychologist I would perhaps see this cognitions based focus as overly simply

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and to some extent missing the point, which is that ‘avoidance behaviours’ are actually ways of being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1962) or modes of existence, chosen by individuals because they offer some benefits to them. Any therapeutic approach designed to tackle them, therefore, would need to incorporate consideration of the choice made by the individual alongside alternative choices and an assessment of their relative costs and benefits.

Looking at the effectiveness of CPT, Monson et al (2006) carried out a controlled trial with 60 military veterans with chronic PTSD and reported significant improvements in both therapist and self-report PTSD symptoms and comorbid symptoms such as guilt, social anxiety and social adjustment.

A more recent study by Dickstein et al (2013) tested responses to Cognitive Processing Therapy in a group of (mainly) veterans with sub-threshold PTSD and compared it to CPT with a group with full diagnostic PTSD. They found that CPT was equally effective with both groups in reducing the symptoms of PTSD. This was a relatively small study with less than 100 participants and most of them were Vietnam veterans, making generalizability of the findings questionable.

#### **2.13.3 Eye Movement Desensitization and Re-Processing for PTSD in Military Populations**

The Eye Movement Desensitization and Re-Processing (EMDR) model is informed by behavioural theories of conditioning. Its founder suggests PTSD arises when triggers in the environment accesses dysfunctionally stored memories *‘derived from earlier life experiences that set in motion a continued*



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*pattern of affect, behavior, cognitions and consequent identity structures'* (Shapiro, 2001, p16). According to Shapiro, bilateral stimulation (paying attention to the internal images, thoughts and emotions provoked by triggers while also focusing on rhythmic external movements or sounds, such as a clock ticking or a eye movements from left to right) stimulates the brain to produce more adaptive memory networks (Russell et al, 2011). EMDR is recognized by Shapiro herself to be grounded upon theory that is no more than a '*working model*' (Shapiro, 2001). Following two decades of controversy (see for example, Albright & Thyer, 2010; Jensen, 1994; Chemtob et al, 2000), there have been a number of studies published more recently that support the efficacy of this treatment for PTSD (De Roos et al, 2011; Arabia et al, 2011). The controversy continues, however, in relation to its mechanism of effect (Russell, 2006) and to whether or not the bilateral stimulation is necessary as part of the treatment (Deusen, 2004). Shapiro's attempts to clarify its mechanism of action seem only to have confused things further. For example, I will leave readers to work out quite what she intended to say here:

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*The system may become unbalanced due to a trauma or through stress engendered during a developmental window, but once appropriately catalyzed and maintained in a dynamic state by EMDR, it transmutes information to a state of therapeutically appropriate resolution. (1991, p153)*

Considering this controversy and lack of clarity, it is surprising to find that the model has been accepted as best practice in both the UK and the US for treatment of PTSD in military populations and surprising also that I have been unable to find a great deal of research to support its use with this specific group.

Russell (2006) carried out a single session of EMDR with four US servicemen and noted that the results were promising but rightly pointed out needed further research. Graca et al (2014) studied 17 ex-servicemen with PTSD treated with EMDR in a residential setting and found reductions in symptoms of PTSD and comorbid symptoms of anxiety and depression in those treated with EMDR. Weeson & Gould, 2009 produced a single case study of a UK soldier in theater who was suffering an acute stress reaction and found there to be significant improvements in the subject's anxiety and distress levels following a short EMDR intervention. These improvements were maintained over 18 months. Very recently, Haagen et al (2015) carried out a systematic literature review of studies that utilized treatments recommended by governmental or professional body guidelines in the UK, US and Australia (including the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health (ACPMH), 2007; Institute of Medicine (IOM), 2008 and International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS), 2009; National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE), 2005) and concluded that the efficacy of EMDR for veterans with PTSD was mixed and certainly less than that

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of Exposure Therapy or Cognitive Processing Therapy and that it therefore required further research. I share Lilienfeld's (2011) concern that this treatment may not stand the test of time and may go the route of other supposed 'wonder treatments' for mental health, such as NLP (Druckman & Sweets, 1988) that proved to be far less effective over time than was initially expected.

As has been demonstrated above, research studies relating to the effectiveness of CBT based approaches to the treatment of PTSD in military populations are largely quantitative, based on the average responses of large treatment groups. They therefore ignore individual factors that influence effectiveness (Haagen et al, 2015). Paulson (2004) points out that CBT for PTSD, while desensitizing the problem at the surface, doesn't always deal with the more fundamental aspects of the individual's life (Paulson & Kripner, 2007), something I have also drawn attention to above. Haagen et al (2015) suggest that future research needs to look at individual treatment responses and mechanisms of therapeutic change as *'the surest way to enhance efficacy'* (Barlow et al, 2013). Kleinman & Kleinman (1989, p8) criticise psychiatry for its conceptualisation based on a medical model of sickness and disease. They point out that the *'most personally unique, therefore most human, meaning of illness begins with the loss of a world'*. This seems not to be recognised within the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy model, something I think is a major weakness of this approach.

## 2.14 Existential/Phenomenological Models of Posttraumatic Stress

Existential therapy is arguably in a unique position to provide insight into individuals' experiences of the loss of a worldview, and existential therapists equally uniquely able therefore to offer insights into the mechanisms of change in those individuals. The term 'existential' tends to resist definition and perhaps the only thing existential thinkers, philosophers or commentators can agree on is that no unitary definition exists. Similarly, it is not a clearly defined therapeutic orientation that offers a systematized or manualised approach to dealing with human distress. As Walsh and McElwain (2001, p254) point out '*it is more appropriate to speak of existential psychotherapies rather than of a single existential psychotherapy*'.

In light of this, it is perhaps of value to define existential therapy for the purposes of this literature review as any form of therapy that is informed by the wisdom and insights of (primarily) existential philosophy. Existential philosophy focuses on individual uniqueness in how we respond to the human universals. As Iacovou and Weixel-Dixon (2015, p4) state:

*Human existence can be understood only through a thorough examination of our experience of what it means to be (Heidegger, 1978) and through an understanding of the universal issues we face in being human, including freedom, responsibility, meaning, isolation, death and anxiety.*

Most of the small body of literature that examines trauma from an existential perspective tends to describe it in terms of a disruption in their experiences of the world. Oakley (2009), for example, draws on Heidegger (1962) when she describes PTSD as being confronted with wholly unfamiliar ways of being-in-the-

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world and Gold (2008) states that trauma is not a specialist area but rather a fundamental aspect of human experience.

Thomas Greening (1971, p125) talks about trauma as something that shatters our relationship with existence.

*Existence, in this sense, includes all the meaning structures that tell us we are a valid and valuable part of the fabric of life.*

He describes an existential-humanistic approach to PTSD, which he says takes into account the loss of meaning and its restoration, and the importance of I-thou (Buber, 1996) encounters in healing (p130). He emphasises confrontation of tragedy and the creation of new meaning and life-enhancing values. He says nothing, however, about how such therapy should be conducted.

There are echoes of Greening's approach in Bo Jacobsen's (2006) paper on trauma and crisis from an existential perspective. Jacobsen comments on the prevailing medical view of PTSD as indicating something is negative or broken in the individual that needs to be repaired, and contrasts it with the existential-humanistic view of crisis. He states that crisis (a term often used interchangeably with trauma (Du Plock, 2010)) challenges the individual with loss and adversity but offers as well a turning point or 'life opening' opportunity. Again, however, little is said about the practical application of this to the therapeutic endeavour, though Du Plock (2010) suggests that Jacobsen's paper is almost a guide advocating that *'the client would need to confront and articulate losses, be afforded the opportunity to sense, acknowledge and express feelings,*

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*while confronting the material that was split off during the traumatic event'*

(Corbett & Milton, 2011).

Paulson and Krippner (2007, p78) talk about the power existential therapy has to help clients with PTSD '*reflect on problems due to lack of meaning in their lives, creating faith in their abilities to discern their own answers*'.

Perhaps it is unsurprising, given existential therapists' resistance to typologies, that I found only one explicit model of PTSD from an existential perspective. I have therefore summarised its key features in some detail as it may offer a starting point for an existential model of trauma.

Harmand et al (1993, p281) examined PTSD in Vietnam combat veterans. They describe the shock of war as '*an event which, by its very nature, constitutes an exceptional form of reality.....existence in its most severe form*'. They state that it is the distinctive quality of the experience - its radicalness - that we are referring to when we call an experience traumatic, and point out that we have no way in the present nomenclature of psychiatry to describe in words the unique nature of the trauma and therefore its unique impact. For Harmand et al (1993), the therapeutic work to be done following trauma is the discovery of meaning (Frankl, 1978). They go further, however, and offer what they call '*descriptive criteria*' (Harmand et al, 1993, p283) for posttraumatic stress from an existential perspective. These criteria are outlined in Table 1 below:

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*Table 1: Existential Indicators of Traumatic Combat Stress*

<b>A.</b>	<b>Extreme anguish of being</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pervasive and chronic sense of dread</li> <li>2. Excessive anxiety</li> <li>3. Feelings of despair</li> <li>4. Apprehensive expectations</li> <li>5. Sense of foreshortened life</li> </ol>
<b>B.</b>	<b>Difficulty in focusing on the traumatic experience</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Impaired ability to recollect disruptive event upon one's sense of self</li> <li>2. Enigma of having experienced real suffering upon being and the incapacity to convey that which is beyond description</li> </ol>
<b>C:</b>	<b>Inability or difficulty in exercising choice in decision-making</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>Alienation</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sense of isolation</li> <li>2. Diminished social interaction</li> <li>3. Inauthentic being with others</li> <li>4. Impaired intimacy</li> </ol>

Harmand and his colleagues then go on to suggest that there are four areas of a combat veteran's PTSD that can be addressed through existential therapy:

1. *The anguish of being*: the experience of combat '*underscores the finitude of existence....any safe illusion about the fullness of life has been painfully extinguished*' (Harmand et al, 1993, p284). Existential therapy supports the individual while they are in 'existential limbo' as they try to make sense of a confrontation with death and the transitory nature of life.

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2. *The inherence of freedom and responsibility:* Even on the battlefield the individual makes choices (even if it is only the attitude they take to their circumstances). Existential therapy helps the individual to recognise that they are continually choosing and they can choose to take responsibility for their own recovery. Thus they develop a sense of their freedom and the opportunities for growth it offers. Harmand et al (1993) also incorporate the concept of 'survivor guilt' (Maher, 2008) in military settings, suggesting that it is an expression of their confrontation with the randomness and absurdity of life. This confrontation challenges the individual to examine their freedom and finitude and re-establish a sense of where the boundaries of their freedom actually lie.
3. *The need for meaning:* emotional wellness depends on us finding meaning in the events in our lives and that meaning may not always be apparent. Existential therapy can help the military veteran to uncover the unique and personal meaning of their experience.
4. *The ongoing process of recovery:* the existential elements of recovery are to carry on living a purposeful life. If the veteran's experience is imbued with meaning then he can carry that meaning with him and carry it further every day - so the process of recovery never ends.

The paper then offers a table of indicators of recovery from trauma, again from an existential perspective.



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*Table2: Existential Indicators of Recovery from Trauma*

<b>A.</b>	<b>Acceptance of one's condition in the here and now</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overcoming sense of dread</li> <li>2. Diminution of intense anxiety</li> <li>3. Reduction in feelings of despair</li> <li>4. Lessened apprehension</li> <li>5. Improved attitude concerning one's future</li> </ol>
<b>B.</b>	<b>Willingness to approach the traumatic experience with supportive guidance</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increased ability to revisit and process the traumatic grief</li> <li>2. Movement towards understanding</li> <li>3. Unlinking irrational cognitions</li> <li>4. Developing a sense of meaning</li> <li>5. Redefining the traumatic experience in a more functional way</li> </ol>
<b>C:</b>	<b>Sense of freedom in determining one's course of action</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>Social integration</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overcoming sense of isolation</li> <li>2. Improved social interaction</li> <li>3. Authentic being-with-others</li> <li>4. Intimacy restored</li> </ol>

Although Harmand and his colleagues offer a few clinical vignettes as illustrations of the use of their model, they don't offer any empirical evidence of its effectiveness. I cannot find any research studies that attempt to develop this model further or test its efficacy.

While there are no other explicit and defined existential models of trauma, the ways in which existential ideas and philosophies can be applied to the concept of

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PTSD is evident in some existential texts. For example, Oakley (2009) draws on Heidegger (1962) when she describes PTSD as being confronted with wholly unfamiliar ways of being-in-the-world. Stolorow (2015) talks about two of trauma's essential features being its context-embeddedness (overwhelming emotions become traumatic when we can't find a context in which it can be held and understood) and its existential significance (emotional trauma plunges us into existential crisis, shatters our previously held feelings of safety in the world, and makes us face up to our finitude).

Although not explicitly described as a model for understanding and working with trauma by its author, the potential of Deurzen's (1998) Four Worlds model of existential therapy for this purpose was explored by Corbett and Milton (2011), who concluded that it had potential to be integrated into, and strengthen, other approaches to counselling for PTSD. Deurzen's model includes: the *physical* dimension, incorporating the relationship between ourselves and our body and the physical environment; the *social* dimension, in which we relate to others through social encounters; the *personal* dimension, which includes our psychological world, personality, character and our intimate relations with others; and finally the spiritual world, incorporating our concerns with meaning, purpose and the dilemmas and paradoxes of life.

Corbett and Milton suggest that the Four Worlds model maps on to the principle issues and concerns experienced by individuals with PTSD as follows:

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*Physical dimension:* therapy can explore the impact of the traumatic event/s on the individual's sense of mortality and physical vulnerability. Bereavement, often a feature of trauma, is also '*a piece of one's own death*' (Jacobesen, 2006, p44) in that we grieve the loss not only of the other but the part of the other that we were attached to. This loss, and the loss of self through physical injury can also be examined in existential therapy.

*Social dimension:* the social impact of trauma - the way symptoms of trauma are responded to by those in our social networks - and indeed the way our cultural milieu constructs and explains trauma, can have an impact on the individual's experience of their trauma. Their exploration can be supported by the existential therapist who is aware that '*our mode of existing within the social dimension affects our response to trauma, or indeed whether we find an event traumatic at all*' (Corbett & Milton, 2011, p66).

*Personal dimension:* trauma can result in psychological losses such as the loss of our understanding of who we are. It can challenge our sense of being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1962), leaving us feeling insecure about ourselves and how we relate to others. Existential therapy can help individuals '*reconnect and rediscover themselves as well as to connect with those who have endured similar circumstances*' (Corbett & Milton, 2011, p66).

*Spiritual dimension:* trauma can change our worldview and the philosophy and values from which it is constructed. It can also enable the individual to connect more vividly with the meaning of their life, and hence to grow and develop. The

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existential therapist can help the client discover '*a paradoxical respect for life that occurs in response to the proximity of death*' (Corbertt & Milton, 2011, p67).

Once again I could find no research papers that developed this proposal further or examined its efficacy in the military or indeed in any other setting. In reality it is a tentative framework suggested as the basis for further elaboration and research.

Very few research papers explore the use of existential concepts of PTSD in a military setting. A PhD dissertation by Grubbs (2013) used the McGill Quality of Life instrument (which has an existential subscale that includes measures of how meaningful participants feel their lives are, whether they have clear life goals and whether they feel they have control over their lives) to evaluate the role of existential-wellbeing in the occurrence of PTSD. Nearly 350 US Air Force combat veterans took part in the study which found that existential wellbeing significantly predicted PTSD - with an inverse relationship. Grubbs suggested that a pre combat training programme to increase existential-wellbeing might reduce the incidence of post combat PTSD. This study suggests that perhaps existential therapy, focused on increasing existential-wellbeing through clarifying meaning, goals and feelings of control, may also lessen the impact of PTSD.

Russian psychologist Magomed-Eminov (1997) carried out research with 200 veterans of the Soviet war in Afghanistan and the Russian Federation's war in Chechnya. He drew on Frankl's (1978) logotherapy to define PTSD from an

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existential perspective as a loss of meaning. He also described a clash of values that veterans experience between those that were valid *before* the war and are valid again *after* the war, and those that were valid *during* the war. PTSD for Magomed-Eminov is the result of a failure to create a meaningful single meaning from these two conflicting sets of values – effectively trying to hold two conflicting worldviews at once. He lists six themes, which he says are indicative of this failure (Magomed-Eminov, 1997, p242):

1. Negative interpretation of one's own deeds
2. Realisation and rejection of values based on ideological grounds
3. Perception of the absurdity of the situation
4. Prolonged cognitive representation of the conflict in the meaning of life
5. Actively trying not to think about the situation
6. Feelings of emptiness, closed to feelings

Magomed-Eminov's research found that veterans whose structured interview demonstrated a high level of meaning conflict were much more likely to be diagnosed with PTSD than those who showed low levels of meaning conflict. It is hard to comment on the quality of this study as no other information is presented with regards to methodology, analysis, etc.

The clash of values described by Magomed-Eminov also features in more recent work by Maguen and Litz (2012) who describe 'moral injury' in veterans of war. Their paper builds on the moral injury framework proposed by Litz et al (2009) that proposes that moral injury results from a failure to navigate ethical and

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moral challenges (or transgressions) that arise due to our own or others' behaviour, or from witnessing human suffering.

Litz and his colleagues base their model on social-cognitive theories of PTSD and the idea that traumatic events conflict with existing schemas that people hold about themselves and their world. They speculate that PTSD occurs when the individual doesn't have the prior knowledge or assumptions required to integrate this new information. They also state, however, that beliefs challenged by moral injury are deeper and more global than those accounted for by social-cognitive theory and that moral injury is in fact a separate concept from PTSD (which does not require a transgression), with the morally injured suffering more guilt, shame and self-condemnation. Further exploration of the efficacy of this model has focused on the use of cognitive behavioural therapies to heal moral injuries (see for example, Smith et al 2013; Steenkamp et al, 2013). Arguably, however, many of the concepts involved in moral injury are existential, indeed moral injury as a concept shares many components with 'existential guilt' as defined by Heidegger (1927) and hence it is worthy of inclusion in this literature review.

Finally, Pitchford (2009), working in the Department of Veteran Affairs in the US, describes the implementation of an existential group therapy model based on Rollo May's (1999) conceptualisation of anxiety as paralysing and the use of the therapeutic setting to explore barriers to freedom and awareness. His paper is case-study based and largely anecdotal, and refers to the need for further research.

## **2.15 The Importance of the Project (Academic and Personal)**

The aim of this literature review was to critically analyse the research of relevance to my research question in order that I might place my research in the context of the academic knowledge gained to date and highlight its unique place within it.

Although, as we have seen, there has been a great deal of research into the impact of active service on military personnel, particularly in relation to PTSD, there is very little that examines the impact of active service on the intimate relationships of servicemen and even less that examines the impact on ex-service personnel.

In addition, there has been almost no research carried out with veterans of the Falklands war. As Wessley & Jones (2004) point out, it should not be assumed that previous conflicts can tell us anything of relevance about the impact of later conflicts, and vice versa. Every conflict has its own characteristics (MacManus et al, 2015; Price, 2007) and service personnel are recruited to fight in these conflicts from different groups (regular and reserved personnel, Army, Navy and Air Force Personnel) with varying degrees of notice, having different levels of expectation of seeing combat, etc. It therefore makes sense that the consequences of any particular war for those directly involved in combat may well be different. For example, a study by Teten et al (2010) outlines that veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan are between 1.9 and 3.1 times more likely to be

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perpetrators of IPV than veterans of the Vietnamese war, lending support to the need for conflict specific research

There is a great deal of research from the 1950s onwards indicating that the psychological impact of war can persist for many years (even many decades) and that symptoms of what we now call PTSD can occur for the first time or significantly worsen many years after combat. Delayed onset/delayed expression PTSD is defined within the DSM-5 as being diagnosed at least 6 months after the trauma exposure (though symptoms can have started before this). The concept of delayed onset PTSD is controversial and has been debated since the PTSD was first defined as a diagnosis. Some medical professionals have claimed it may be a consequence of people malingering in the hope of claiming disability compensation and some research has considered the possibility that drug taking or alcohol abuse or pre-combat pathologies account for the phenomenon (Atkinson et al, 1982; Sparr & Pancratz, 1983; Solomon et al 1989). Since then, the concept has been the subject of some research (Horesh et al, 2015; Goodwin et al, 2013; Utzon-Frank et al, 2014), which suggests it is a legitimate diagnosis though it may on occasions indicate merely that a formal diagnosis of PTSD has not been made earlier despite the presence of various symptoms of the disorder. As the veterans of the Falklands War (and indeed the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan) get older, it is important to look at the long term impact that combat has upon those individuals and their relationships if we are to understand the support they may need in the years and decades to come.



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Finally, there is almost no existential-phenomenological counselling psychology research on the impact of active service on relationships or indeed on the impact of PTSD on relationships. As identified by Haagen et al (2005) above, most research in these areas is quantitative and hence does not provide detailed individual responses with which to inform the development of psychotherapeutic treatment approaches.

The objective of this thesis then is to gain a detailed understanding of how active service may impact on the intimate relationships of ex-servicemen and in doing so take a step towards filling some of the gaps in the current body of research as highlighted above.

### **3. Methodology and Method**

In this section I will describe the methodology I use in this study (using the term 'methodology' as Silverman (1993, p1) does, to refer to '*a general approach to studying research topics*') and I will describe to the reader how I chose this methodology and how it fits with my own epistemological position. I will also explain the method (or specific research technique) chosen and its suitability for the exploration of the question under consideration. In doing so, I will also outline why other research methods were not selected. Finally, the link between my research methodology, research method and research question will be clarified and confirmed.

#### **3.1 Methodology**

##### **3.1.1 My Epistemological Journey**

*Qualitative researchers have a responsibility to make their epistemological position clear, conduct their research in a manner consistent with that position, and present their findings in a ways that allows them to be evaluated appropriately. (Madill et al, 2000, p17)*

To determine the methodology best suited to my research question I first had to investigate the philosophical basis of psychological research in general, understand the epistemological positions of various research methodologies and establish my own epistemological position in relation to these.

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As I researched the history of research psychology, I became familiar with its development from origins as a science of experience (Smith, 2008), in the experimental and quantitative psychology of Fechner (1860/1966) and Wundt (1874/1904); through its positivist turn with the work of behaviourists and their belief in analytical, generalizable science; the post-positivist shift to the hypothetico-deductivism of Popper (1959) with its focus on deduction and falsification; the recognition that scientific theory emerges in revolutionary leaps and bounds or paradigm shifts (Kuhn, 1962) and its more recent focus on the role of history, linguistics and culture in the social-construction of knowledge (Burr, 2003). As I reflected on this development I became aware of how my own epistemological position has undergone a similar journey and transformation over time.

As a teenager, I understood the world, and my perception and understanding of it, to be related in a straightforward way. My stance can probably best be described as a positivist one, with an element of empiricism (the two are closely related (Willig, 2000)) - realism featured strongly and I saw it as possible to describe what is 'out there in the world' and to do so correctly. As Kirk and Miller (1989, p14) describe it

*...the external world itself determines absolutely the one and only correct view that can be taken of it, independent of the process or circumstances of viewing.*

In this epistemology, my place as an individual was as part of 'the real world' and my ideas, feelings and memories were firmly and unquestioningly situated in this world. Going to university to study psychology with this stance, it was not

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difficult to accept the prevailing view that the way to further knowledge in the psychological field was to set up experiments in which I could seek to disprove hypotheses, assess relationships between variables and work towards the establishment of scientific facts (Smith, 2008, p10). As such, my stance was perfectly in accordance with what Willig (2013, p4) described as her view of research as an undergraduate psychologist:

*Research appeared to involve choosing the right ingredients (a representative sample, a standardized measurement instrument, the appropriate statistical test) and administering them in the right order (the 'procedure'). Having done our best to 'get it right', we would hold our breath, hoping that the experiment had 'worked' – much like hovering about the kitchen, waiting for the perfect roast to emerge from the oven.*

At university, my stance was influenced strongly by the hypothetico-deductivism of Popper (1959), which is a philosophy of science that still dominates in psychology today.

*As an academic discipline, psychology has shown a historic tendency to identify with the methods and values of the 'hard', natural sciences. Any graduate of a psychology degree course will be aware of the importance of measurement, experimentation and statistics in achieving valid knowledge. (McLeod, 2008, p65)*

Even in counselling psychology, the focus on deduction and falsification remains, and criticisms of this epistemological approach, such as its inherent discouraging of creative and adventurous theory (though Popper did encourage '*bold conjectures*' (1965, p231)), acceptance of the male as the norm, and placement of the researcher outside the phenomenon, have until the last five to 10 years failed to impact greatly on mainstream research in the social sciences.

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My first real introduction into qualitative research came when I became a management consultant and was expected to develop and implement qualitative research methodologies to examine the ideas, beliefs and feelings of people at work. While all qualitative research methods arguably concern themselves with meaning (Willig, 2013), my use of focus groups and semi-structured interviews, and brief dabbling into grounded theory, could not yet be described as taking place with the aim of identifying 'what it was like' or 'how people understand' their particular circumstances. I still saw qualitative research as something designed to examine a '*system of objective variables*' (Smith, 2008, p5) and my role as being to discover these variables in the particular situation I was employed to examine.

It was only when I started my Doctorate in Counselling Psychology that I was introduced to the phenomenological viewpoint in which human beings are seen as inexorably part of the world and the role of the researcher is to examine the worldview and '*try to describe an individual's experience within this particular meaningful realm*' (Smith, 2008, p5). Phenomenology was a revelation to me, fitting perfectly with my experience of personal therapy in which I was enabled to look at my life in so many different ways and to acknowledge the difficulty of relationships with others precisely because of the idiosyncrasy with which each of us develops our worldview.

According to Willig (2008), thinking, talking and writing about my epistemological position and comparing it to others' is the basis of reflexivity and helps us understand the extent and limitations of our and their positions.

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I'd therefore like to look at my epistemological journey from a more academic perspective now, highlighting the theoretical bases of the stops along the way.

### 3.1.2 Why Qualitative Research?

*Qualitative research (quails means 'whatness') asks the **ti estin** question: what is it? What is this phenomenon in its whatness. (Manen, 2007, p33)*

As outlined above, quantitative research (and indeed mainstream experimental psychology) is based on an epistemological position that sees knowledge as unitary, generalisable and capable of determination through a standardized scientific process (McLeod, 2008), while qualitative researchers subscribe to a belief that we must see knowledge as situated within a specific context and that it '*cannot be free from time and location or the mind of the human actor*' (Flick 2009, p8).

Although qualitative research is often stated as having emerged in the work of anthropologists and sociologists such as Mead (1935) and Malinowski (1922) it can arguably be traced back much further than this. In psychology, for example, it was a feature of the work of people like Freud (1856-1939) and Piaget (1896-1980), whose theories were often based on detailed analysis of case studies. The development of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and the publication of Filstead's (1970) book on qualitative research methods marked its arrival in modern academia. Since then a wide range of different qualitative research methods have emerged that are arguably as idiosyncratic as the contexts being researched and the researchers researching them.

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Despite its growth in popularity, until recently, qualitative research was defined in negative terms e.g. as what it was not, in acknowledgement perhaps of its rejection of the traditional positivist scientific view to research. For example, Miles and Huberman (1994) described qualitative research as being based upon *'words rather than numbers'* and Strauss and Corbin (1998, p17) described it as *'any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification'*.

More recent definitions of qualitative research have focused on the common factors inherent in all or most qualitative research methodologies, including its focus on what emerges from the data rather than on a predetermined theory, the primacy of the meanings, perceptions and interpretations of those involved in the research instead of a search for causation and explanation, and the importance of context and real life over controlled laboratory settings (Flick, 2009).

*Qualitative research involves broadly stated questions about human experiences and realities, studied through sustained contact with people in their natural environments generating rich, descriptive data that helps us to understand their experiences and attitudes. (Rees, 1996, p375)*

Smith (2008) points out that qualitative research allows researchers to map and explore the meaning behind a particular aspect of human experience and Bates (1995) cites qualitative research's focus on a holistic approach to understanding people, as evidence of its suitability for exploring psychological phenomena in particular.

As I outlined earlier, qualitative research, with its broad focus and exploration of

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the unique meanings people bring to their experiences, and its refusal to reduce people and their lives to cause and effect relationships, is consistent with my personal epistemology. I agree with Flick 2009 (p34) when he argues that quantitative research in psychology in particular, *'lacks relevance for everyday life because it is not sufficiently dedicated to exactly describing the details of a case in its concrete circumstances'*. I also believe that something is lost when data is taken by the researcher and transformed into numbers and statistics for analysis (Smith et al, 2009). Quantitative data deals with averages and probabilities and as Kastenbaum describes *'indeterministic statistical zones that construct people who never were and never could be'* (quoted in Datan, Rodeheaver & Hughes, 1987, p156). There is something in Kastenbaum's quote that impresses upon me a sense of what we lose when we conduct research in a quantitative way – the individual, the soul, the center, the person themselves. This loss seems too much to bear and seems to take the sense and value from the research altogether. Qualitative research gives me the opportunity to listen (Willig, 2008) to what the participants are revealing; to honour their diversity and individuality and to gain a more complete understanding of what I am researching.

Kvale (1995, p 27) describes qualitative research as being about *'craftmanship'*. It seems to me that all human interactions, and particularly attempts to understand the worldview of another, require craftsmanship. The term recognizes the role that the researcher has in crafting an understanding of the subjective reality of the participants through reflexive description, and even interpretation, of the raw material presented by those participants. This



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interaction between researcher and participant leads to the generation of concepts, which are a product of the '*research act*' (Denzin, 1989b) and have emerged from the interaction.

In making a choice to use a qualitative research method, I also considered the most frequently mentioned downsides of qualitative research. Willig (2008), for example, suggests that such research doesn't allow for the identification of generally applicable laws of cause and effect. While such laws may exist in the world of matter, it is my view that in the complex world of human social and psychological processes it is meaningless to reduce things to the point at which they are isolated from the context in which they occur. Exactitude and certainty do not exist with such phenomenon. Similarly, the fact that qualitative research tends to work in depth with small numbers of participants and therefore can't make claims about trends and distributions in a population can be challenged. Psychologists have long recognized that we should not neglect the unique in individual experience (Smith, 2011). Allport (1961, p8) for example, objected to Eysenck's (1952) assertion that '*to the scientist, the unique individual is simply the point of intersection of a number of quantitative variables*', championing idiographic psychology and challenging the view of psychology as nomothetic (interested only in general dimensions on which people vary). For me, only qualitative research is able to generate awareness of the diversity in human perception, meaning making and beliefs. Only qualitative research '*provides a hearing for the voices of the excluded*' (Smith, 2011, p25).

Ultimately, of course, my choice to take a qualitative approach to this research

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was based not simply on its promise to give a voice to my participants, or the fact that it complements my personal epistemology. Of much more importance is the fact that my research aims to understand how my participants make sense of their world, particularly in relation to the impact of active service on their relationships. I don't want to measure, predict or test something. For me the central concern of psychology should be human experience. Only a qualitative methodology can hope to produce a rich and textured sense of 'what it's like' to experience something.

#### **3.1.3 Why Phenomenology?**

Willig (2013) in her seminal text on qualitative research suggests that qualitative research methodologies can be divided according to the type of knowledge that they seek. In particular, she identifies three types of knowledge – realist, phenomenological and social constructionist – along with their underlying epistemological positions. Realist approaches assume there are social and psychological processes that exist and seek to capture these as truthfully as possible. Phenomenological approaches seek to understand experience as described by those experiencing it, and assume there is more than one 'truth' and more than one 'world'. Finally social construction focuses on the way people use language to construct knowledge about the world.

I chose to adopt a phenomenological approach to my research question for two reasons. Firstly, my personal epistemological stance is that that human experience can best be understood by considering how objects and events

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appear to consciousness (Smith, 2011) rather than by seeking to identify common psychological processes or by taking the role of the '*architect*' (Willig, 2013, p18) by examining experience with a view as to how it has been constructed and with what materials.

Secondly, I considered the type of knowledge I wanted to generate around my research question. Social constructivism would help me understand how ex-servicemen use language to construct their understanding of the impact of active service on their relationships and how they use these constructions to position themselves and others in their lives. An approach based on realism might allow me to identify the psychological processes involved in my participants' responses to active service or in their approaches to intimate relationships. However neither approach would enable me to understand the inner experience of the impact of active service on relationships and the feelings, ideas, values, perceptions that make up that inner experience.

*The aim is to capture as closely as possible the way in which the phenomenon is experienced within the context in which the experience takes place. (Smith, 2011, p28)*

As an existential-phenomenological Counselling Psychologist, my aim is to discover 'what it is like' to experience active service and 'what it means' to experience intimate relationships following active service. I want to get to grips with the quality and texture of the phenomena I am studying, in the context in which it appears.

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*This is what phenomenological psychology is all about – rich description of people's experiences, so that we can understand them in new, subtle and different ways and then use this new knowledge to make a difference to the lived world of ourselves and others. (Langdridge, 2007, p9)*

Phenomenology as a philosophical movement can be traced back many thousands of years but became prominent in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, emerging from the work primarily of Edmund Husserl (1859-1939). Husserl felt that knowledge could not be generated through logic alone (McLeod, 2001). He built on Brentano's idea of intentionality, the notion that humans engage with things in their environment through their consciousness of them, ascribing meaning to them and forming representations of them as a result (Iacovou and Weixel-Dixon, 2015). Husserl extended this notion to explain how we construct reality by 'reaching out' to objects and people and making meaning from what we encounter. For him, the divide between consciousness and the world was fictitious (Cohn, 1997) as '*an invariant relationship exists between the real world and our conscious experience of it*' (Spinelli, 2005, p12). He departed from the Cartesian (Descartes 1596-1650) dualism that has dominated scientific thought since the enlightenment by rejecting the subject-object split and placing our experiences firmly in the world. Fundamentally, he believed it was possible to reveal the true nature of things – to '*return to the thing itself*' (Husserl, 1936, p34) – not through construction or formation but through description of lived experience. Husserl's phenomenological method of arriving at knowledge was based on his belief that it is possible to transcend the '*natural attitude*' (Langdridge, 2009, p17) – to step outside our everyday experiences – and make a reflexive move to turn our attention away from objects in the world and turn it

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towards our inward perception of those objects by bracketing or suspending our preconceived ideas and beliefs about those objects – something he called the Rule of Epoché (Smith, et al, 2009).

*Putting it in brackets shuts out from the phenomenological field the world as it exists for the subject in simple absoluteness; its place, however, is taken by the world as given in consciousness (perceived, remembered, judged, thought, valued, etc.).* (Husserl 1927, p13)

Additionally, he felt that if something was examined in this way, it could reveal *'that which lies before one in phenomenological purity'* (Husserl, 1931, p262) and therefore allow us to identify universal truths about that thing. He termed this move towards identifying what is invariable or essential about something *eidetic intuition* (Moran, 2000). Husserl's phenomenology then is a science of essences. It aims to enable basic concepts to be framed in a rigorous way that gives us a firm basis for our understanding of them (Smith, 2008. p11).

Psychology and phenomenology both emerged as academic disciplines at around the same time (the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century). While early psychologists were *'extremely conservative'* (Smith, 2011, p27) in their determination of what defines scientific method, phenomenologists sought to establish a new radical basis for human science. As a result the interactions between the two were difficult and characterized by misunderstandings (Cloonan, 1995; Merleau-Ponty, 1964). However the two came together in the pioneering phenomenological research carried out at Duquesne University (Van Kaam, 1959; Giorgi 1970, 1994; Giorgi et al, 1975).

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Van Kaam (1966) argued convincingly that all psychology should acknowledge its existential foundations (Van Kaam, 1966) and his student, Amedeo Giorgi, developed his professor's ideas into a research framework that was true to the Husserlian tradition of transcendental phenomenology and became known as descriptive phenomenology. However, phenomenological philosophers have been '*extraordinarily diverse in their interpretation of the central issues of phenomenology, in their application of what they understood to be the phenomenological method*' (Moran, 2000, p3) and an equally great range of phenomenological research methods has emerged from this philosophical diversity. Broadly descriptive methods include the open lifeworld approach of Dahlberg et al, 2008, Les Todres' (2007) Embodied Enquiry, Ashworth's (2003) Lifeworld Phenomenology and Collaizi's (1978) phenomenological enquiry.

In Europe, a second main category of phenomenological research methods emerged and has its origins in the philosophical work of Heidegger (1889-1976) Sartre (1905-1980) and Merleau-Ponty (and to a lesser extent Gadamer (1900-2002) and Ricoeur (1913-2005)) and in what is commonly known as the hermeneutic turn (Langdrige, 2009, p41)) towards a more interpretative phenomenology.

### 3.1.4 Why Interpretative Phenomenology?

So, while all phenomenology is broadly descriptive in that it attempts to describe rather explain phenomena, interpretative phenomenology posits that all description is in fact a type of interpretation. Van Manen (2007, p180, cited in Giorgi, 2008, p168) puts it this way:

*...the phenomenological 'facts' of lived experience are always already meaningfully (hermeneutically) experienced. Moreover even the 'facts' of lived experience need to be captured in language (the human science text) and this is inevitably an interpretative process.*

So while descriptive phenomenologists follow Husserl's philosophy and attempt to 'reveal essential general meaning structures of a phenomenon' (Finlay, 2009, p10) and stay as close as they can to the original account of an experience, interpretative phenomenologists acknowledge the inevitability of interpretation and the situated nature of knowledge. Interpretative phenomenological research methods have philosophical roots in Heidegger's assertion that it is not possible to bracket our way of seeing the world in order to identify the essence of an object or experience. Instead, Heidegger asserted, we should accept that existence (Dasein, or 'being in the world' (Heidegger, 1962)) is '*always already*' thrown into a pre-existing world of people, things, ideas, beliefs, cultures and languages and can't separate itself from this world (Smith et al, 2009, p17). Hence our understanding of the world is interpretative from the very start and interpretation is an '*inevitable and basic structure*' of our being-in-the-world (Finlay, 2009, p11).

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*The meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation.* (Heidegger, 1962, p37)

In place of Husserl's notion of 'intentionality', Heidegger talks about self-directedness and choice. He highlights our ability to choose amongst possibilities for our Dasein and divides our possibilities into authentic and inauthentic ways of being. Copperstone (2009, p333) argues that Heidegger's hermeneutic or interpretative phenomenology is a '*violent act*' that '*disturbs the everydayness*' of existence and therefore reveals Dasein's way of being in the world.

Other philosophers whose work influenced interpretative phenomenology include Sartre (1905-1980) and Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961). Sartre focused on what he saw as the emptiness of existence, declaring in *Being and Nothingness* (1943) that there are no essential qualities to consciousness and that to exist means to be free – indeed we are '*condemned to be free*'. In other words we are verb-like beings constantly choosing (within the facticity of our existence) rather than nouns like fixed objects and therefore consciousness can't be pinned down, studied and measured as we might measure objects or things in the natural world. Like Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty emphasized the situated and interpretative quality of our knowledge about the world. However, while Heidegger (1962) talked about the worldiness of our existence, Merleau-Ponty (1962) emphasized the embodied nature of our relationship to the world (Smith et al, 2009) and proposed that the body should not be conceived as an object in the world but rather as our means of communication with it (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p106). He suggested that it is by our actions – the positions we take in the



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world - that we make ourselves and the world meaningful. For Merleau-Ponty (1962), we are condemned to meaning (Langdridge, 2007, p37).

The work of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, together with Heidegger's definitive turn away from Husserlian phenomenology influenced the development of more interpretative phenomenological research methods as it furnished the researcher with concepts such as choice, freedom, embodiment, etc., with which to interrogate their data. As Smith et al (2009, p21) state, the work of these philosophers perhaps offers the most distinct idea of what interpretative phenomenology could offer those seeking to understand the human condition:

*..a penetrating analysis of people engaged in projects in the world and the embodied, interpersonal, affective and moral nature of those encounters.*

It is this kind of penetrative analysis of the human condition that most interests me as a researcher. I believe that Heidegger is right when he argues that all of our experiences, our ideas, values and perceptions are forged by our interactions with a world in which we are immersed ('*self and world are inseparable components of meaning*' (Moustakas, 1994, p28)) - a process Spinelli (2007) describes as '*worlding*' - and that therefore objective reality does not exist (Iacovou & Weixel-Dixon, 2015).

Fundamentally, we are interpretative beings, seeking to understand other interpretative beings, and sometimes do not disclose ourselves in a straightforward way. It's important to remember however that in opting for an interpretative phenomenological research method I will not be digging for alternative meanings or explanations to those that emerge in my participants'

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accounts, in the way, for example, that psychoanalysts would (Langdridge, 2007), and that Ricoeur (1970) would describe as the '*hermeneutics of suspicion*'. Rather I will be aiming to develop a greater understanding of what my participants' experiences were like in their own terms, e.g. to adopt what Ricoeur calls a '*hermeneutics of meaning recollection*' or a '*hermeneutics of empathy*'. In this way I hope to '*draw out*' or '*disclose*' the meaning of these experiences (Smith et al, 2009, p36).

Researchers are inevitably situated in relationship to the participant and in relationship to the world the participant describes. I think it is better to acknowledge that my understanding is both enabled and limited by my pre-understanding, as Gadamer (1996) suggests, and to accept that it is neither possible nor desirable to set aside or bracket my experience and understanding throughout the research process. Rather it is important to examine and question my pre-existing beliefs and bring a '*critical self-awareness of my own subjectivity, vested interests, predilections and assumptions and to be conscious of how these might impact on the research process and findings*' (Finlay, 2009).

To summarise then, the turn away from descriptive phenomenology reflects a fundamental difference in philosophy between Husserlian phenomenologists who believe that it is possible to impart, or to receive, a pure description of any experience, and phenomenologists influenced by Heidegger's conviction that what is imparted and received is viewed through a complex, interwoven lens of experiences, values and beliefs, by the inevitability of our 'being-in-the-world' (1962).

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*We always speak from somewhere, being unable to transcend our historical and cultural position.* (Langdridge, 2007, p53)

Descriptive phenomenological research aims to arrive at common concepts integral to an experience through assessing and neutralizing these biases and preconceptions. Interpretative phenomenological research on the other hand, acknowledges these biases and preconceptions and aims to make this interpretation explicit, enabling the researcher to discover how the worldview of any individual participant in their study contributes to the '*commonalities in and differences between their subjective experiences*' (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p729).

If my research aimed to identify the essence of the phenomenon under consideration, my research question would be better stated as 'What is the lived experience of the impact of active service on the relationships of ex-servicemen?'. My research on the other hand seeks to go beyond this, to provide an in-depth analysis of the topic, acknowledging my role in the process and bringing forward what was previously hidden.

### **3.1.5 Why Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis?**

As with descriptive phenomenology, there are a number of different interpretative phenomenological research methods including Packer and Addison's (1989) Hermeneutic Investigation, Van Manen's (2007) Lived Experience Human Science, Smith's Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, and the relatively new Structured Existential Analysis developed by Deurzen (2015).

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After some consideration, I selected Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as a research methodology.

Jonathan Smith first articulated Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in the mid 1990's (Smith, 1996). One of its key strengths (and attractive to me as a trainee counselling psychologist) is that it is '*a qualitative approach centered in psychology*' rather than being imported from different disciplines (Smith, et al, 2009, p4). This set it apart from, for example, sociologically based methods such as Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which arguably would be more likely to focus on the social phenomenon of post traumatic stress and its universal features rather than on the unique phenomenon of the psychological experiences of my participants. I also found Grounded Theory to be associated with many passionate and controversial debates (Willig, 2008) around different versions of the method, which I feel makes it more difficult to apply with confidence.

The aims and methodology of IPA, on the other hand, are well defined and are explored in a variety of texts. The creator of the IPA methodology, Smith et al (1997, p189) describes IPA as '*an attempt to unravel the meanings contained in...accounts through a process of interpretative engagement with the texts and transcripts*'. Later, writing with Flowers and Larkin, Smith (2009) contrasted Husserl's aim – to find the essence of experience – with IPA's more modest aim of capturing particular experiences as experienced by particular people. In particular, IPA attempts to engage with the point at which experience becomes

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‘an experience’ e.g. the moment the individual is reflecting on the meaning and significance of experience and attempting to make sense of it.

*...because IPA has a model of the person as a sense-making creature, the meaning which is bestowed by the participant on experience, as it becomes an experience, can be said to represent the experience itself.* (Smith, et al, 2009, p33)

Four aspects of IPA that particularly complement my personal epistemology, fit philosophically with my research question and resonate strongly with the aims of my research are worth highlighting as influencing my choice of this research methodology.

First of all, as highlighted earlier, IPA is an *interpretative* phenomenological methodology, rather than a *descriptive* phenomenological method, and seeks to take the collective contributions of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre and create ‘*a mature, multi-faceted and holistic phenomenology*’ (Smith, et al, 2009, p34). In other words, although IPA research seeks in part to get an insider’s perspective (Conrad, 1987) on the participants’ experiences and to stand in their shoes (Smith, et al, 2009), IPA researchers accept the impossibility of getting direct access to these experiences. IPA researchers therefore see themselves as standing alongside the participant, examining them from a different perspectives and puzzling over their words in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the nature and quality of phenomena as they present themselves (Willig, 2012, p56). I believe that if we are to understand, we need to interpret. I concur with IPA’s assumptions that my interpretations are not biases to be eliminated (Willig, 2008) - instead, provided they are subject to reflection and curiosity, such

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interpretations offer sources of insight into the experience I am trying to understand.

Secondly, IPA is an idiographic method that investigates individuals' experiences and the meaning they bring to them in their own terms, aiming to understand the complex uniqueness of their accounts. However it avoids sliding into '*methodological solipsism*' (Smith et al, 2009, p70) by acknowledging that the interpretations people make are made within a particular context and are based upon social interactions and processes that are shared by others in that context, allowing an element of curiosity about how the individual findings might relate to the experiences of the wider group. This is in contrast to psychology generally which tends to be nomothetic e.g. concerned with identifying cause and effect relationships and with identifying patterns at the level of the group. IPA has a strong commitment to the noetic or particular and suggests that understanding the particular meaning brought by a particular participant to a particular experience and in a particular context can inform more general claims - but in a different way to that suggested by traditional psychological science (Harré, 1997).

Thirdly, IPA is a hermeneutic method (hermeneutics being the theory of interpretation, brought together with phenomenology most notably in the work of Heidegger). It focuses on the hermeneutics of meaning but also introduces a hermeneutics of questioning, and posits that interpretation is acceptable as long as it reveals what is there (Smith, 2004; Larkin et al, 2006) and does not apply predefined category systems. It recognizes that there is something unique about

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the researcher and the participant and that the uniqueness in both will influence the way the meaning of the text that is produced from the encounter. By acknowledging and reflecting on their situatedness, and bringing it overtly into focus alongside the meaning making engaged in by the participant, the researcher can hope to produce not a '*definitive or true reading of participants' accounts*' (Osborn & Smith, 1998, p67) but certainly '*an understanding of the utterer better than he understands himself*' (Schleiermacher, 1998, p266). This understanding will emerge from systematic and detailed analysis of the text at the level of the individual, from the analysis of the larger data set, from engagement with psychological theory and from insights, reflections and connections that occur to the researcher as they seek to bring to the forefront the meaning experienced by the participant.

*Without the phenomenology there would be nothing to interpret; without the hermeneutics, the phenomenon would not be seen. (Schleiermacher, 1998, p37)*

This merging of psychological theory with the phenomenon being investigated for me gives IPA an advantage over more philosophically based interpretative phenomenological methods such as van Manen's (1997) 'Grounded Hermeneutics', which I feel lack the methodological clarity and rigour of IPA. Van Manen does offer an in-depth treatise on hermeneutics and in particular the tensions that exist in phenomenology between the specific and the universal.

*Phenomenological understanding is distinctly existential, emotive, enactive, embodied, situational, and nontheoretic; a powerful phenomenological text thrives on a certain irrevocable tension between what is unique and what is shared, between particular and transcendent meaning, and between the reflective and the prereflective spheres of the lifeworld. (van Manen, 1997,*

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p346).

However, it is possible to benefit from the insights he offers without electing to use Grounded Hermeneutics (van Manen, 1997) as they contained also within the philosophical foundations of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as outlined by Smith (1998).

Finally, IPA research also requires the researcher to interrogate their findings against the existing psychological literature and this, together with IPA's recognition of the situatedness of participants does enable IPA to shed light, albeit cautiously on existing nomothetic research.

To conclude, IPA offers a systematic analytic procedure and describes the analytic process in detail (e.g. Smith, 1998, 1999; Flowers et al, 1997, 1998; Jarman et al. 1997; Smith and Osbourne, 2008). However, it seeks to avoid '*methodolatry*' (the glorification of method) so IPA guidelines are '*recommendations for getting started, rather than permanent prescriptions*' (Smith, et al, 2009, p5). As such, it acknowledges the importance of the researcher's interpretations but doesn't give guidelines on how to incorporate those interpretations into the research and nor does it place them within a particular psychological theoretical framework (Willig, 2008). For me this means that the method offers the potential of 'discovery' of meaning and a freedom within which I can seek understanding.



### 3.1.6 Criticisms of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

It is this very freedom (alluded to above) that leads Giorgi (2010), one of the main critics of IPA, to question its validity as a method and as readers will see later on in this thesis, this freedom is something that I found both liberating and terrifying as I undertook the analysis phase of my research. Giorgi's view is that the flexibility of IPA – *'there is no single, definitive way to do IPA'* (Smith & Osbourne, 2008, p54) – means that studies using IPA are not replicable and therefore represent *'pure and simply bad science'* (2010, p4). In the end, however I agree with Smith (2010, p189) when he responds to what he sees as Giorgi's very limited and narrowly focused understanding of IPA and points out that the very concept of replicability is a construct *'that derives from paradigmatic assumptions which do not necessarily apply in, or sit easily with, human science'*. He also highlights the fact that IPA does not offer total freedom, but in fact requires researchers to follow a number of different steps in a particular order and requires them to be skilled in interviewing, analysis, interpretation and writing.

As Langdridge (2007, p167) states, *'no method provides the tools to find all the answers to all the questions'*, making it important to acknowledge the possible limitations of my chosen method.

Willig (2013) describes some of IPA's limitations. Firstly, she points out that it doesn't acknowledge the role language plays in constructing and shaping meaning (something that Discourse Analysis (Parker, 1997) focuses upon).

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Discourse Analysis appears to me to be a methodology that distances itself from the individual (something Langdridge, 2004, p345, describes as '*the lack of a person*'), placing the researcher in the 'analyst' role, a position I don't find comfortable. In a related point, Willig (2013) also notes that IPA may not be an effective research method with participants who are unable, for whatever reason, to express their thoughts and feelings fully. The participants in my research were trained in communication skills and volunteered specifically to recount the impact of a major life experience. I believe the research transcripts confirm that they were more than capable of giving detailed accounts of their experiences. It is worth noting, also, that participants with brain injuries were purposively excluded from the study in acknowledgement of the importance of language skills in generating the rich description required by IPA.

Willig (2013) also points out that IPA, with its focus on generating such rich descriptions doesn't address questions around *why* the experience has taken place or *why* there are differences between individuals in their descriptions of the same experience. Had I wanted to identify explanatory frameworks, I might have chosen Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006) as a methodology. However, in my view, this method fails to address the issue of reflexivity (Stanley & Wise, 1983) by neglecting the role of the researcher in the formation of such explanations.

Langdridge (2007) questions the association that is often made between IPA and Cognition (Smith and Osbourne, 2003; Willig, 2013) and the contradiction between this stance and the methodology's phenomenological foundations. This

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contradiction does indeed exist, but, as Langdridge (2007) suggests most IPA researchers do in practice, I made a conscious attempt to focus on understanding the meaning of my participants' experiences and tried not to stray into speculation about their cognitive processes.

Finally, I think it is worth acknowledging that IPA does not explicitly address two elements of human experience - that of paradox and temporality - that are acknowledged and indeed form fundamental elements of another interpretative phenomenological approach; Deurzen's (2015) Structured Existential Analysis. As readers will discover in the results and discussion section of this report, temporality and in particular the recognition that 'we are in time' (Deurzen, 2015, p12) is a strong feature of the narratives of my participants. Similarly, conflicts and paradoxes around, for example, freedom and security, also feature strongly in their accounts. Had I been starting my research more recently I may well have considered Deurzen's method more thoroughly. As it is, however, I am convinced that my knowledge of her work (particularly having collaborated with her on a book on existential relationship therapy) enabled me to ensure these elements of my participants experiences were identified, acknowledged and understood.

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## An Existential-Phenomenological Study

### 3.2 Method

#### 3.2.1 The Research Question

Having confirmed that I wanted to use Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to examine the lived experience of servicemen, I considered a number of possible broad research topics including:

- Active service
- Deployment and family life
- Leaving the armed forces
- Posttraumatic stress
- Fatherhood and armed service
- Intimate relationships in the armed services

I then narrowed down my list of possible topics by conducting some basic literature searches to determine what if any existing published research existed, and to determine the potential value or contribution of further research (particularly phenomenological research). As a result of this process I discounted 'active service', 'posttraumatic stress', 'leaving the armed forces' and 'fatherhood and armed service' as being too general and/or already widely researched, or simply as topics that 'didn't grab me' e.g. were not interesting enough to me personally to motivate me to explore them in depth.

At this time I was employed as a relationship therapist with the British Forces in Cyprus and was carrying out a lot of work with couples and individuals where

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relationships with their partners had been impacted upon in some way as a result of their armed service. This caused me to reflect on my own experience of being married to a serviceman and I became curious as to how such service might affect intimate relationships. I therefore decided to explore the possibility of basing my research on this topic.

A closer review of the literature in this area confirmed that this was not a topic that had been explored extensively (either qualitatively or quantitatively) and I could find no existential-phenomenological based research of relevance. I still felt I needed, however, to narrow my question down further in order to make it manageable within a doctoral dissertation of this size and to ensure that it would generate data in depth as well as breadth about a particular experience. I reflected also on the value of the knowledge that my research question might produce and considered whom I would be producing this knowledge for and how it might be used (Willig, 2000). Through my work as a Forces Therapist, my studies towards this Doctorate, and my marriage, I was aware of the impact that active service in particular could have upon the physical and emotional wellbeing of service personnel and became curious about the impact of such experiences on the intimate relationships of those individuals. I then formulated my research question as follows:

*The impact of active service on the intimate relationships of ex-servicemen:  
an existential-phenomenological study.*

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Willig (2008) points out that the research question is always provisional because the researcher might find that it isn't relevant or appropriate to the experiences of the participants. During my project's data gathering stage I realized my participants weren't answering my research question directly but rather were describing the impact of active service *on them as individuals* and then stating how these changes in them impacted on their relationships. In retrospect, I can see that the question contained two assumptions or hypotheses (firstly that active service *does* impact on intimate relationships and also that this impact is experienced *directly*). As such, my question was arguably not open-ended. More detail on the challenges this created and how I addressed those challenges can be found below. In addition, the extent to which the literature review shed light upon the way the participants answered the research question is considered in my Discussion chapter.

#### **3.2.2 Link Between the Methodology and Research Question**

I hope that I have now demonstrated how IPA allows me to match the epistemological assumptions of my research question with the method employed to explore it (Smith, et al, 2009). The belief behind my research question is that my data will tell me something about how the participants are oriented to, or make sense of their world. IPA is ideal for this kind of research question, as it focuses on '*personal meaning and sense-making in a particular context, for people who share a particular experience*' (Smith, et al, 2009).

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IPA also allows me to '*examine in detail psychological variability within the group*' (Smith et al, 2009, p50), to work in an idiographic way, focusing, at least initially, on a single case. This is important as I wanted to hear the participants' voices in my final report, (something that can be lost in other research methods, such as Discourse Analysis).

Active service in hostile war-torn environments is likely to count as a major life experience for servicemen. As Smith, et al (2009, p1) outline '*IPA is a qualitative approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences*'.

Finally, I want ultimately to be able to contribute to what Langdridge (2007, p109) calls '*genuinely real and useful social change*,' and IPA is a pragmatic research methodology, designed with this aim firmly in mind.

### **3.2.3 Interview Design**

The aim of this study was to look at the ways in which ex-servicemen describe and explain the impact of active service on their intimate relationships.

(Intimate relationships are those involving romantic/sexual partners, such as girlfriends, boyfriends, fiancés, fiancées, wives and husbands.) In particular I wanted to explore if, and how, participants' ways of making sense of life, and their values, beliefs and behaviours, are changed by their experiences of active service, and if, or how, these changes have affected their relationships.

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Smith (2011) suggests that the best way to collect data for IPA analysis is through the semi structured interview (see also Smith & Eatough, 2007), with broad, open-ended questions and associated prompts allowing a free-flowing and dynamic dialogue between researcher and research participant. I was aware that I had a broad area of interest to explore but had a philosophical commitment to allowing the respondents space in which they could introduce their own interests and concerns within this area.

When constructing the semi-structured interview schedule, I was keen to:

- Allow the participants to tell their stories in a way that made sense to them (Smith, 2011) by developing a set of questions and prompts that could be used flexibly and dynamically depending on the direction the participant wanted to take the discussions.
- Build rapport and trust through 'warm up' questions around the wider context of the individual's time in the armed forces. Willig (2008, p25) emphasizes the importance of this rapport and reminds interviewers that this will require sensitive and ethical negotiation.
- Allow me to '*narrow the funnel*' (Smith and Osborn, 2003) towards the particular aspects of participants' experiences relevant to the research question.
- Encourage responses from participants that revealed the nature and meaning of their experiences as they understood them, while taking care not to abuse the informal ambience of the interview by encouraging participants



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to reveal more than they may feel comfortable with after the interview  
(Willig, 2008).

A list of the interview questions and prompts used in the pilot interview, together with the revised questions used in subsequent interviews can be found in Appendix 2.

### **3.2.4 Participation Criteria**

Interested participants were eligible to take part if they met the following criteria:

- a) Had previously served in the British military (Army, Royal Navy or Royal Air Force)
- b) Had experienced at least one month of active service either as a combatant or peace-keeper
- c) Had at least one intimate relationship during or after this period of active service

The decision to work with ex rather than serving military personnel was made on pragmatic grounds e.g. due to the difficulty of obtaining Ministry of Defence approval for research outside the UK with currently serving personnel. There were also ethical considerations, however, as I had concerns about encouraging participants to explore the impact of active service when there was a very real possibility that they may experience this again in the future.

I chose to exclude ex-servicewomen because female personnel are less likely to

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have been deployed to war zones and are not permitted to fight on the front line. There were no exclusion criteria in terms of age, sexual preference or nationality because I regarded these factors as irrelevant to the research question. Nor did I exclude any particular rank, as I was not examining the participants' experiences of active service per se, but rather the impact of them having been on active service on their intimate relationships. I did exclude participants who had suffered brain injuries as these could potentially have affected their cognitions, reflections and opinions.

#### 3.2.5 Ethical Approval

Brinkmann and Kvale (2008, p31) remind us that qualitative research of any kind raises a myriad of ethical issues because *'the human interaction in qualitative inquiries affects researchers and participants, and the knowledge produced through qualitative research affects our understanding of the human condition'*. This study was reviewed and given ethical approval by the Middlesex University, School of Health and Social Sciences Health Studies Ethics' sub-committee on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2010 (see Appendix 3) and was carried out in accordance with the ethical code of the British Psychological Society. During the recruitment phase of the research, additional ethical approval was sought to enable me to carry out interviews via SKYPE (see Appendix 4, which contains the ethical justification and revised consent form and participant briefing form for use with SKYPE participants). This demonstrates Brinkmann and Kvale's (2008) point that ethics is not a one off activity you undertake during the planning stage of a research project.

### 3.2.6 Participant Sample

IPA is an idiographic research method that offers in depth insights on particular experiences or perspectives and therefore utilizes small sample sizes (Langdridge, 2007; Smith et al, 2009), usually of three to six participants. My research proposal contained a desired sample size of 8-10 participants, which is more than would usually be recommended, particularly for novice researchers (Smith et al, 2009). However, Smith and Eatough (in Breakwell, et al, 2007, p328) state that it is important that a '*particular figure....does not become reified*'. I decided to stick to this sample size, despite the additional workload required, and feel that the depth and breadth of data generated through the interviews more than justifies the additional work involved.

Participants were invited to take part in the research through:

- An invitation to participate placed on Facebook, with links to a group page to allow potential participants to get more information prior to contacting me
- Tweets with links to the Facebook group page
- An advert on the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Research web page  
([http://www.bacp.co.uk/research/Research\\_Notice\\_Board/index.php](http://www.bacp.co.uk/research/Research_Notice_Board/index.php)) and in their Therapy Today magazine
- Invitations to participate made via the Facebook groups of relevant ex-servicemen associations (HMS Sheffield D80; Royal British Legion; Type 42 Association; Falklands 30; SSAFA)

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- An advert on the notice boards at the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling

It became clear midway through recruitment that my participants were coming from a Royal Naval background (including the Royal Marines), were aged between 51 and 71, and all had experience of active service during the Falklands War of 1982. This was due to the fact that my husband was a member of a number of groups and other members of these groups came forward as volunteers. I was happy to progress with this purposive sample as none of the individuals were personal friends of my husband and I hadn't previously met or known of any of them. Also I was aware that Smith et al (2009, p49) state that *'most frequently potential participants are contacted via: referral, from various kinds of gatekeepers; opportunities as a result of one's own contacts; or snowballing (which amounts to referral by participants)'*. In light of IPA's requirement for a *'relatively homogeneous sample'* (Smith et al, 2009, p45), I made the decision to exclude two participants who had served in the Army and Royal Air Force respectively.

Demographic and other information about my participants can be found in the table below (additional information can also be found Table 8 in the Results section of this report):

**Table 3: Participant Demographics I**

Research name & ID no.	Age	Experience of Active Service	Interview
------------------------	-----	------------------------------	-----------

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			format
<b>Damien</b>	57	Falklands War (Royal Navy)	F2F
<b>James</b>	52	Falklands War (Royal Navy)	F2F
<b>George</b>	51	Falklands War (Royal Navy)	F2F
<b>Tom</b>	63	Falklands War (Royal Marines)	SKYPE
<b>Greg</b>	51	Falklands War (Royal Navy) Gulf War Bosnia	F2F
<b>Paul</b>	55	Falklands War (Royal Navy)	F2F
<b>Dennis</b>	55	Falklands War (Royal Navy)	F2F
<b>Arthur</b>	51	Falklands War (Royal Navy) Gulf War	F2F
<b>John</b>	51	Falklands War	F2F
<b>Ron</b>	71	Falklands Conflict (Royal Navy)	SKYPE

All the participants contacted me by email to indicate their interest in taking part in the research, at which point I emailed them a participants' briefing sheet (see Appendix 5), and a consent form, and indicated my willingness to answer any further questions by email or telephone. Interviews with those who agreed to participate were arranged through email or by telephone, depending on the preference of the individual. Two participants (Tom and Ron) requested SKYPE interviews and ethical approval was sought and given for this variation to my original research proposal (see Appendix 4 for the rationale proposed). I made minor changes to my participant briefing sheet and consent form for participants taking part via SKYPE (also available in Appendix 4). These changes also received ethical approval prior to my implementing them.

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In making the changes to allow SKYPE interviews I took full cognizance of the BPS Ethics Guidelines for Internet Mediated Research (BPS, 2013). The authors of these guidelines acknowledge that the internet and its associated technologies increase the opportunities for psychological research but also point out that such technology potentially '*restricts the researcher's capacity, in contexts where a participant is actively aware of and knowingly participating in a study ....to monitor, support or even terminate the study if adverse reactions become apparent*' (BPS, 2013, p3). To address this issue I ensured that the participants were not alone in their home when interviewed (though they were, of course, alone in the particular room in which they chose to be interviewed). I also requested and obtained a contact number for a designated friend or family member of each of the two participants interviewed using SKYPE, to be used in the event that the individual became distressed and terminated the session unexpectedly. Finally I was careful to check in with the participants throughout the interview regarding their level of comfort and willingness to progress with the discussions.

### **3.2.7 Data Collection**

#### **Pilot Interviews**

Having gained ethical approval for this research in August 2010, my personal circumstances, including a family move from Cyprus to the United Kingdom, the need to seek new employment, etc., meant that I had less time to devote to its completion. I conducted an initial pilot interview with Damien in 2012. I then took a two and a half year break from my studies to develop my private practice,

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during which time I maintained my interest in academic writing by completing two books on existential psychotherapy. I returned to my studies in September 2014 in a very different position personally and professionally. With many additional hours of experience as existential-phenomenological therapist, I felt comfortable with my therapeutic identity and confident of my ability to work phenomenologically, applying the rules of *époché*, horizontalisation and description to facilitate trust and disclosure.

Reflecting on the pilot interview carried out 29 months before, I noted that though it potentially offered something to the study it was not conducted in a particularly phenomenological way. I had been nervous, inexperienced in IPA research interviewing and unfamiliar with the interview structure. Reviewing the transcript through more experienced eyes, I determined to make a number of changes prior to my second interview including changing the order of the questions so that they flowed more naturally, and ensuring that I knew them off by heart so that I wasn't distracted from the interaction by the effort of keeping them in mind. I also realized that many of the questions were closed and adjusted them so that they were open. Finally, recognising the need to keep in mind the core research question, I also determined to stay with the lived experience of the participant as closely as possible and to reflect on whether or not to include the pilot interview in the analysis following completion of the interviews.

The second interview (completed over two years after the first) generated a wealth of rich and descriptive data and after discussions with my supervisor no

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further changes to the interview or question structure were made for later interviews.

Having reflected on the professional and personal journey I had been on since carrying out the first interview I acknowledged, as mentioned above, that the stance I had taken in that first interview was not very phenomenological. I was also aware that the interviewee had been at onetime my husband's friend and that this may have affected his responses. I might have been concerned about omitting it from the study and denying the participant his voice and also about adding a bias to my research by excluding 'less rich' accounts. Before the analysis stage of my research, however, the participant made it clear that he no longer wanted to be included in the research and so I omitted his interview from the study.

### **The Interviews**

The research interviews were carried out in a range of office locations close to the homes of the participants. These locations were as indicated on Table 4.



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*Table 4: Location of Research Interviews*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>Damien</b>	Hale Village Therapy Center
<b>James</b>	University of Derby
<b>George</b>	Business Center, Cambridge
<b>Tom</b>	SKYPE (my home office)
<b>Greg</b>	Forces Recruiting Office, Manchester
<b>Paul</b>	British Legion Office, Portsmouth
<b>Dennis</b>	Regus Office, Portsmouth
<b>Arthur</b>	Regus Office, Portsmouth
<b>John</b>	Regus Office Portsmouth
<b>Ron</b>	SKYPE (my home office)

All were professional office locations and meetings took place during normal working hours with administrative or other staff in close proximity. In each case I informed my supervisor of the place and time of the interview and texted her both before going in to the interview and at its conclusion. Participants were asked to sign a consent form and were taken through the participant briefing sheet to confirm their understanding of the research objectives and processes, reaffirm their right to withdraw and the anonymity of their responses and particularly to ensure they gave informed consent to their participation (Elmes et al (1995)).

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I allotted up to one hour and 15 minutes for each interview, with an additional 15 minutes for a debrief. In the event the interviews took between 41 minutes and 2 hours and 20 minutes. I allowed the interview length to be dictated by the participants' need to tell their stories, mindful of Kvale's (1986, p4) metaphor of the researcher as a traveller who *'wanders along with local inhabitants, asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of their lived world, and converses with them in the original Latin meaning of conversation as 'wandering together with'*. The interviews were recorded on a digital Dictaphone and on my mobile phone as back up. Participants were asked at least once during their interview if they were feeling able to continue and at its conclusion were taken through a debriefing process and given a debriefing sheet containing details of organisations that offer support to ex-servicemen, together with my contact details and those of my supervisor.

The interviews were transferred onto my computer and then deleted from both mobile devices. My computer is password protected and individual files were encrypted for security. I contacted each participant by email two weeks after their interview (as agreed during their debrief) to confirm that they were not adversely affected by participation in the research and to remind them of the support service available.

### **3.2.8 Data Analysis**

Novice IPA researchers are encouraged to feel positive about analyzing their data and to take their time with each analytical stage to enable them to develop their confidence (Smith & Eatough, 2007; Smith and Osborn, 2003; Smith et al, 2009). I found the analysis process initially very challenging – it was easy to immerse myself in the data but not so easy to rise above the detail to apply psychological concepts and theories, identify broad themes, etc. Full details of the journey I took in analysing the data are to be found in the Chapter 4 of this report: Analysis and Results.

### **3.2.9 Report Writing**

Having concluded the analysis process, I attempted to organize the data into a coherent form that highlighted the key themes emerging from it but also demonstrated the process by which the themes emerged e.g. from initial comments through to themes, initial clusters and final clusters. I then worked to produce results and discussion chapters that took full account of my research diary, initial notes, literature review, etc. Like the data analysis, this process was an iterative one, with the final report emerging from a number of cycles of writing and rewriting.

### **3.2.10 Reflexivity**

As outlined above, my epistemological reflexivity (Willig, 2008) lead me to select an interpretative phenomenological model to recognize openly the *'fore-having,*

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*fore-sight and fore-conception'* (Heidegger, 1927/1962) that I as the researcher bring to the encounter – to examine it and include it within the context of the relationship between me and the participants.

Reflexivity demands that the researcher examine his/her own personal and professional reasons for asking the research question (Willig, 2008). My interest in this project is threefold: firstly as a psychologist and researcher, secondly as someone particularly interested in developing existential theory and practice in the area of relationships, and thirdly as the wife of an ex-serviceman who experienced active service.

I reflected on each of these areas throughout this research project – from initial conception through to the data analysis and report writing – and recorded my reflections in a research diary. Of particular importance, were my perceptions of each participant and my reflections on my interaction with them both prior to, and following each interview. These were taken into account when I was analyzing the data in ways that are described in more detail in later. As Smith (2009, p26) suggests, we can't simply identify our preconceptions at the start of a research process '*one may only really know what the preconceptions are once the interpretation is underway*'.

It was during the analysis in particular, therefore, that I attempted to conduct '*deliberate, controlled reflection*' (Smith, et al, 2009, p189) and to use these reflections to interpret each experience recounted by my participants by '*honing it, stretching it and employing it with a particular degree of determination and*

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*rigour'* (Smith, et al, 2009, p189). I recognise that this activity produces conclusions that are particular to me, rather than being 'objective' or replicable per se. However, I hope that, as Peshkin (1988, p18) states, my subjectivities *'can be seen as virtuous for it is the basis of researchers making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected'*.

#### 3.2.11 Quality

Willig (2008) points out that the criteria used to evaluate the scientific value of quantitative research in psychology (such as reliability, representativeness, etc.) are not generally applicable to qualitative research. Indeed Forshaw (2007, p478) makes the paradoxical stance taken by some qualitative psychologists clear when he states that *'there is a worrying double-standard: on the one hand we are turning our backs on 'truth' but on the other we are working out methods to understand texts and prescribing how we should tackle understanding them'*.

Appropriate criteria by which to judge the quality of qualitative research have been identified (for example, see Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992; Eliot et al, 1999; Madill et al, 2000). However many of them have been criticised (see Smith et al, 2009, for example) as too simplistic or too prescriptive. I have chosen to assess my study against Yardley's (2000, 2008) four broad criteria for quality control, which are accepted as being particularly appropriate measures for IPA research (Smith et al, 2009).

Yardley's first principle is sensitivity to context and suggests that the researcher

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should have an 'extensive grounding in the philosophy of the approach adopted' (Yardley, 2000, p217) and also in the methodology and method involved. In addition, the researcher should seek to understand the socio-cultural setting of the study and the impact this might have on their own beliefs and values and those of the participants. Finally this principle highlights the importance of sensitivity towards the relationship between researcher and participants. I believe my in depth and reflexive enquiry into my methodology of choice, my commitment to understanding and applying appropriate methods and the way in which I reflected on my relationship with each of my participants and with the data throughout the process, demonstrate adherence to this principle.

Commitment and rigour make up Yardley's second principle and refer to thoroughness and to commitment to prolonged involvement with the topic. I think that my thoroughness is demonstrated in my application of the methodology. My involvement with the topic extends beyond the research to my own experience of a relationship with an ex-serviceman who has experienced active service. Indeed the research was heuristic in that I was able to discuss key concepts and ideas emerging from it with my partner, who could in other circumstances have been a participant in my research.

The third principle is transparency (about the research methods used) and coherence, which refers to the completeness of the analysis and the clarity and power of the analysis. Transparency is achieved in this project by the in depth description offered of the methods used and by the extensive use of excerpts from the research transcripts. In relation to coherence, I believe my analysis of

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the data and discussion of the results presents a powerful narrative that '*exerts its effect partly (or sometimes wholly) by (re)creating a reality which readers recognise as meaningful to them*' (Yardley, 2000, p200).

*The ultimate value of a piece of research can only be assessed in relation to the objectives of the analysis, the applications it was intended for, and the community for whom the findings were deemed relevant* (Yardley, 2000, p221)

As this quote illustrates, Yardley's fourth and '*decisive criterion*' for evaluating research is impact and importance. Langdridge (2007) expresses concern that this criterion reinforces the pressure upon researchers to produce research that ultimately has a monetary value. I don't think this invalidates the principle itself. Any researcher must surely aim to have an impact. As Smith (2011, p250) states '*there is no point in carrying out research unless the findings have the potential to make a difference*'. For my part, I certainly believe that my research adds something significant to the literature and hope that ultimately it will affect practice and policy. It is true, however, that impact is hard to assess, particularly in the short term, and also a lack of apparent impact doesn't necessarily infer a lack of quality.

It is hoped that assessing my research against Yardley's criteria adds to its credibility. Like Yardley herself, however, I remain wary of the danger of being overly simplistic when defining what constitutes good qualitative research.

*What is needed is a wider appreciation of the inherent complexities and ambiguities associated with evaluating qualitative studies* (Yardley, 2000, p222).

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1 Introduction

Transparency of method, and in particular method of analysis, is important in any qualitative research project (Yardley, 2000). Providing this information for IPA research studies can be particularly challenging as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is such an iterative process, involving the challenge of a double hermeneutic (the researcher is trying to make sense of the narratives of participants, who in turn are trying to make sense of their experiences).

As you will see, I have included detailed information in this section of my report on the journey I undertook when analysing the data provided by my participants. I hope that this demonstrates the care I took with each individual case, taking note of the nuances of similarities and differences between narratives as I went along and only then moving slowly towards initial, intermediate and then final conclusions as to the broad themes and meta-themes. At times I was very aware that I was doing what Smith et al (p35) describe as the '*detective work*' required to facilitate the coming forth of the themes from the data.



## 4.2 Challenges in Analysing the Data

The analysis of the participants' interview transcripts proved extremely challenging due to:

- **The richness of the data:** most of the participants talked at length about their experiences, demonstrating a willingness to engage in depth with my study and responding to my questions and probes with incredibly rich and descriptive reflections. As an illustration, the analysis of James' transcript initially identified nearly 400 emerging themes (see Photo A below).
- **My inexperience with IPA research** – IPA, as described by Smith et al (2009) is a deceptively simple and easy to understand method. However, in reality it is an art, and my initial attempts to become an IPA artist were clumsy. As highlighted earlier in this report, I found it difficult to make the interpretative leap. I also struggled initially to focus on my research question rather than on the full breadth of the complex, interwoven narratives the participants offered.
- **My sense of loyalty to the participants:** my own involvement with the data and my commitment to allowing their individual voices to be heard made it challenging for me to pull together a summary of common themes. While my analysis can't, I don't believe, be described as crude, it at points threatened to become fragmented and over-analysed.
- **The way participants related to my research question:** as outlined in the methodology section above, in general the participants described the impact of active service *on themselves* – in terms of the changes to their worldview

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and/or to their emotions and behaviours – and only then moved on to talk about how these changes (rather than active service itself) impacted on their intimate relationships. This made the analysis more challenging as the link between the participants' experience of active service and their relationships was generally described in an indirect way, requiring me to follow a logic that was inferred rather than explicit.

- **The way in which themes appeared, disappeared or changed in their emphasis at different times in the participants' journeys:** participants described the impact of active service on them in the context of their personal journeys – in other words, in temporal terms. As a result, the themes that emerged appeared to greater or lesser extent at various stages in these journeys. It became clear to me that in order to understand the impact of active service on their relationships, my participants started with their worldview – and the themes that illustrated their worldview - prior to active service. Although this is not within the scope of this study, I believe that further analysis of these themes in future will offer further understanding as to why active service had a particular impact on these participants. It was challenging for me to leave what feels like part of the story told by my participants out of this report.

I responded to these challenges as they emerged at various stages throughout the analysis process, as outlined below.

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### 4.3 Pilot Interview Analysis

James was my second pilot interview, the first pilot interview having been discounted from the study (for reasons described earlier). The analysis of James' interview took me some time as I strove to apply a truly phenomenological curiosity to his narrative. Having listened to the interview a number of times, I found it straightforward enough to note my initial reflections in the right hand column. As detailed elsewhere in this report, it took me some time (and guidance from my supervisor) before I was able to make the interpretative leap. Having made the leap, my analysis produced hundreds of emerging themes as is illustrated in Appendix 7 and shown in Photo A.

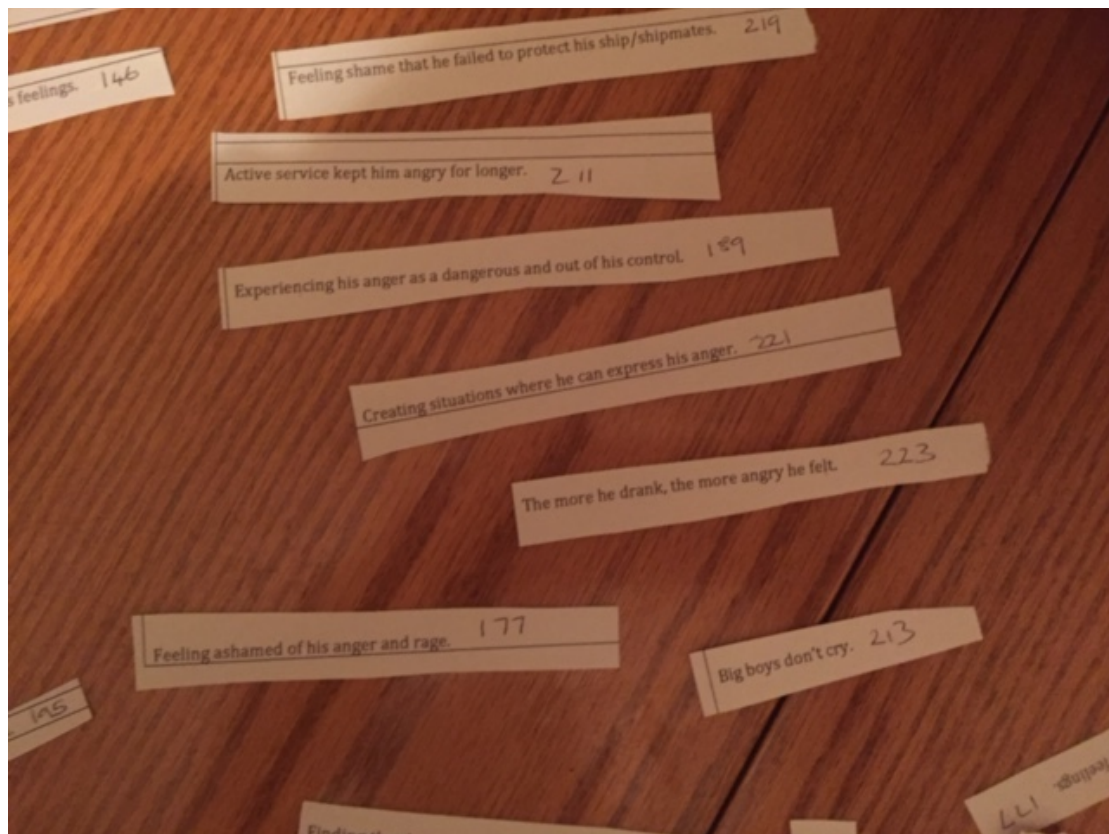
*Photo A: Pilot Interview Emerging Themes*



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Sifting, sorting and grouping the emerging themes was a challenging and lengthy task. Photo B shows the emotion of anger emerging from the process. This later became part of the theme 'Overwhelming Emotions'.

*Photo B: The Emergence of Anger*



In carrying out this work I noticed that James described his story over time and identified the following time periods: before joining the Navy; joining the Navy; before active service; after active service; now. I wondered if sorting my themes and their associated emerging themes into these time slots might add something to the analysis. I therefore cross-tabulated the emerging themes identified against the time slots appearing from his narrative (see Appendix 7). In doing this I identified that having five time periods was over complex and that actually

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the narrative seemed to fit into the three broad time slots:

- Before active service - his reasons for joining the Navy and the expectations and hopes he had, life in the Navy prior to active service
- Active service - the impact active service had on him as an individual
- After active service - the impact the changes in him had on his life and on his intimate relationships

I therefore simplified the table and reviewed the themes and emerging themes within them again, producing a final list of 37 themes, which I was able to group into 10 meta-themes, as shown in Table 5

*Table 5: Final 10 Meta-themes and Themes Emerging from James' Transcript*

Before active service	Active service	After active service
<b>1. A SENSE OF SELF</b>	<b>3. EXISTENTIAL CONFRONTATIONS</b>	<b>6. SEEKING A RELATIONSHIP</b>
1.1 Seeking a sense of self	3.1 Confronting his mortality	6.1 Wanting someone on his side
1.2 Wanting to stand out from the crowd	3.2 Confronting 'throwness'	6.2 Seeking a solid home base
1.3 Feeling disconnected from his family	<b>4. OVERWHELMING EMOTIONS</b>	6.3 Seeking safety in a relationship
1.4 The ship as home and shipmates as family	4.1 Anger and rage	<b>7. SELF AND OTHER</b>
<b>2. MEANING AND DIRECTION</b>	4.2 Grief and loss	7.1 Finding it difficult to compromise his needs for those of his partner/s
2.1 Seeking meaning and direction	4.3 Failure and shame	7.2 Feeling unable to ask his partner to meet his needs
2.2 Seeking to escape his family	4.4 Anxiety	<b>8. ALIENATION</b>
2.3 Seeking freedom and	4.5 Drinking and fighting as a way to cope with difficult feelings	8.1 Feeling others could not
	4.6 Drinking and fighting to	

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independence	enable him to express his feelings	understand
2.4 Relationships restrict your freedom	4.7 Feeling ashamed of his behavior	8.2 Feeling judged by his partner
	<b>5. WORLDVIEW</b>	8.3 Feeling like an outsider
	5.1 The show must go on	8.4 Feeling different from other people
	5.2 Real men don't cry	<b>9. WITHDRAWAL AND ISOLATION</b>
	5.3 Emotions are dangerous and destructive	9.1 Withholding his feelings from his partner
	5.4 Emotions are shameful	9.2 Seeking to isolate himself from his partner
		9.3 Seeking to escape the social world
		<b>10. GROWTH AND RESILIENCE</b>
		10.1 Seeking professional help
		10.2 Seeking meaning in his experience of active service
		10.3 Finding new meaning in difficult past experience
		10.4 Sharing his emotions with his partner

It is important to note that the meta-themes and subthemes are identified in the time period in which they predominate but that they are not exclusively demonstrated within this time frame. So, for example, theme 2.1 *Seeking meaning and direction* was a major theme that emerged from James' description

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of his motivation for joining the Navy as this quote illustrates:

**James:** *Eh, once I lost my step brother I, eh, lost probably a lot of direction, eh, and just became a really angry young man and wanted to get away from, eh, my family, Oldingham and everything else. So that probably help...was another defining factor as to why I joined the Navy as well. (10)*

This theme therefore is noted in the 'Before active service' time frame. However, this theme also appears when James describes his struggle to make sense of what happened to him on active service:

**James:** *I think it was purely and simply the fact that it was, you know, I am glad to be alive, it was a close call, it was all that sort of thing, eh, and, eh, what does the future look like. You know, what, em....and I think once we'd got married, em, that really started to, em, I suppose really demonstrate that the important thing would be Julia and the kids. (150)*

So while the time frame delineation adds something to the analysis and represents the temporal way in which James understood his experiences, themes are not absolutely delineated within time frames.



#### **4.4 Analysis of the Remaining Interviews**

Having demonstrated the process followed in this initial analysis, I will now describe the steps taken to analyse the remaining transcripts.

I took each transcript in turn and followed the IPA process of first of all noting my thoughts and reflections in the right hand column (Smith et al, 2008) before noting emerging themes in the left hand column. I took care during this process to bracket, as much as possible, my conclusions as to the themes emerging from the analysis of the first transcript – whilst acknowledging that a complete bracketing is impossible as my fore-structures had changed (Smith et al, p100) as a result of encounter with the first transcript. Taking an extended gap of a month or so between first and second/additional transcript analyses aided the bracketing process to some extent, however, and I was comfortable that I took each narrative on its own merits. I then took the emerging themes from each interview and slotted them into the themes that had emerged from my pilot interview. I was careful not to squeeze newly emerging themes into this framework, instead noting the additional themes as they emerged and noting also where themes that emerged in James' narrative did not emerge in the narrative of other participants. I then revisited all of the analyses to assess whether or not the new themes appeared in some or all of the narratives. As a result, I was able to produce a master table listing 61 themes and showing which participants' narratives they appeared within (see Appendix 8). (The red themes are those that were added during analyses subsequent to James'. The name in brackets highlights from which participant analysis the theme emerged.)



Clearly it is not possible to deal with such a large number of themes in a project of this sort due to time constraints. It was also clear to me that:

- There was some overlap between some of the themes – for example, 8.4 *Feeling like an outsider* and 8.5 *Feeling different from other people* seemed to be addressing similar concepts.
- Some themes were complementary opposites of each other – for example 6.3 *Seeking safety in a relationship* and 6.6 *Avoiding relationships*.
- Some themes seemed naturally to lend themselves to being grouped together – for example 10.2 *Seeking meaning in his experience of active service* and 10.3 *Finding new meaning in difficult past experiences* appeared to sit well under the heading ‘seeking meaning’.
- Not all the themes appeared as relevant to the research question as others – for example, the contribution of 1.2 *Wanting to stand out from the crowd* to answering the question of the impact of active service on intimate relationships was indirect.

I therefore decided to go through the process of identifying meta-themes and themes once again from scratch. To do this, I took all 61 themes and again stuck them on individual bits of paper and sorted them again, based on the narrative that seemed to be emerging from the sum of the analyses rather than based on the narrative from the first analysis. This allowed me to consolidate many of the themes and to identify four meta-themes and 22 themes (see Appendix 9). These seemed to fit more naturally into four categories of time: before active service; active service; after active service; now.

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I then went back to each individual analysis and looked to see if they remained consistent with the new theme structure and to check that the roots of the new theme structure could be seen clearly in these analyses. I did this by selecting every 10<sup>th</sup> emerging theme from each analysis and looking to see if it fit within one of the themes or meta-themes. I was pleased to see that the vast majority of the emerging themes did fit and that those that didn't related to very idiosyncratic elements of an individual's story and/or were not relevant to the research question. (See also Appendix 9 for a table showing which themes were evident in each participant's narrative.)

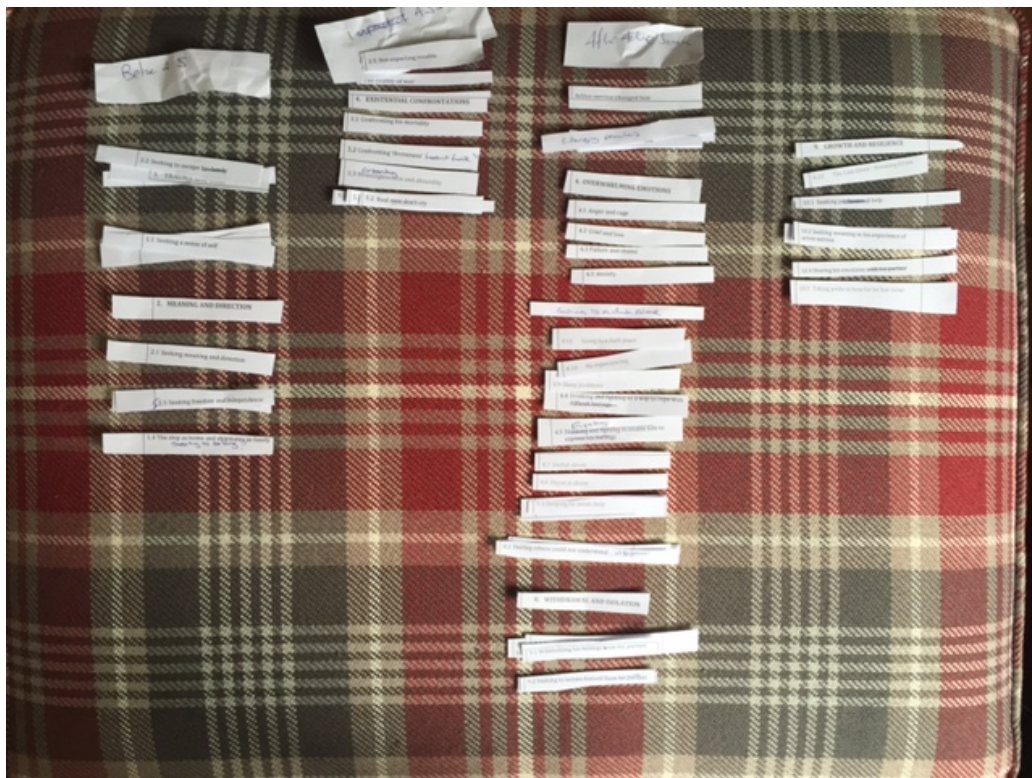
***Table 6: Initial Meta-themes and Themes***

Before active service	Active Service	After Active Service	Now
<b>1. A SENSE OF SELF</b>	<b>2. EXISTENTIAL CONFRONTATIONS</b>	<b>3. CHANGING</b>	<b>4. GROWTH AND RESILIENCE</b>
1.1 Seeking to escape	2.1 Existential confrontations	3.1 Changing priorities	4.1 Breaking down
1.2 Seeking a sense of self	2.2 Expectations versus reality	3.2 Changing emotions	4.2 Seeking meaning
1.3 Seeking meaning and direction		3.3 Overwhelming emotions	4.3 Sharing
1.4 Seeking freedom and independence		3.5 Alienation	4.5 Hope for the future
1.5 Seeking adventure		3.6 Withdrawal and isolation	
1.6 Seeking to belong		3.4 Despair	
<b>1.7 Worldview</b>			

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Finally, I reviewed the themes again, together with a range of illustrative quotes from the transcripts, and identified three meta-themes and 10 themes that were core to my answering the research question (see Photo C) and took place within three timeframes – Active Service, After Active Service, Now.

*Photo C: A Final Review of Themes*



This was challenging for me as arguably my participants had given me the answer to many research questions I did not ask, such as: Why did you join the Navy in the first place?; How did your experiences growing up shape your worldviews?; What was the difference between your expectations of Navy life and the reality of war?; How did you make sense of your experiences of active service?. All of these factors together build a rich and interwoven picture as to who they were and how they experienced life before and after joining the Navy

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and before and after active service. Although not strictly relevant to the research question, they offer potential for further insights into, for example, the extent to which childhood trauma or loss contributed to the participants later experiencing posttraumatic stress disorder or symptoms of this disorder. These questions could be addressed in follow up papers following completion of this dissertation.

These final themes of core relevance to the research question then are highlighted in Table 7 below and together tell the story of the psychological journey my participants described to me.

*Table 7: Final Themes*

Active Service	After Active Service	Now
<b>EXISTENTIAL CONFRONTATIONS</b>	<b>CHANGING</b>	<b>GROWTH AND RESILIENCE</b>
1. Existential confrontations	2. Changing self 3. Changing priorities 4. Overwhelming emotions 5. Alienation 6. Withdrawal and isolation 7. Going to a dark place 8. Breaking down	9. Sharing 10. Hope for the future

At this point I concluded that my final meta-themes and themes answered the research question and were truly reflective of the descriptions of my participants, revealing with accuracy and depth the story of their psychological journey.

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In describing this process in such detail, I hope I have demonstrated that the meta-themes and themes are the result of an iterative, intensive and deeply reflective engagement with the text (something I described in my research diary as '*an exhausting wrestling match with a seemingly endless number of rounds!*'). I suspect that I have also illustrated somewhat vividly how steep the learning curve is for a novice user of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (or for *this* novice user, at least).

## **5. Results**

### **5.1 Background - The Participants' Relationship History**

As outlined earlier, my participant sample were all men aged 51 to 71 and all saw active service in the Falklands War of 1982. The participants were aged between 19 and 39 when they served in the Falklands and all but two of them were ship based throughout the conflict, with one being land based as a marine and the other being a medic and therefore being both ship and land based. Four of the participants were married at this point (one newly married e.g. less than 6 months before the conflict started), one was engaged to be married, two had casual girlfriends and two were single (see Table 8.).

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*Table 8: Participant Demographics II*

Participant	Age now	Age joined Navy	Active service	Ship/ Land based	Age during active service	Relationship status during active service
James	51	16	Falklands	Ship	19	Casual girlfriend
George	53	16	Conflict Falklands	Ship	21	Casual girlfriend
Tom	63	24	Conflict Falklands	Land	28	Married
Greg	51	16	Conflict Falklands	Ship	19	Newly married
Paul	55	16	Bosnia Falklands	Ship	23	Married
Dennis	55	16	Conflict Falklands	Ship	19	Single
Arthur	51	19	Conflict Falklands	Both	22	Engaged
Ron	71	18	Gulf War Falklands	Ship	39	Married
John	52	17	Conflict Falklands	Ship	19	Single

The relationship history of the participants was varied. Two participants had been married only once and remained married. Tom married at age 18, was married with two children when he went to the Falkland Islands. John married a woman who wrote to him before and during his active service and they married within a few months of his return from active service.

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Two participants had been married and divorced once and had since remarried. James had a casual girlfriend when he went on active service but married her six months after he returned from active service. That marriage ended in divorce after 11 years. Ron got married age 21 and divorced after 26 years. Both were married to their second wives at the time of interview.

Five of the participants – George, Greg, Paul, Dennis and Arthur – had been married and divorced twice at time of interview. George was married for the third time, having married his first wife two years after his return from active service. They divorced after around eight years together. He didn't talk much about his second marriage. At the time of interview he was married to his third wife and they had been together for nine years. Greg was newly married at the time he went to the Falklands. They divorced after seven years. He married again and divorced, again after seven years, and was in a long-term relationship when he took part in this research. Paul was married with a child and another on the way at the point of active service. They divorced after seven years. His second marriage also lasted seven years. At the time of interview he had been with his third wife for 14 years. Dennis married his first wife shortly after he returned from active service but they divorced after 14 months. His second marriage lasted for 18 years before ending in divorce. He was with a long term partner at the time of interview. Finally, Arthur was engaged to be married when he went to the Falkland Islands and married his finance on his return. They divorced and he married again. That marriage ended in divorce after 10



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years. He then had ten years as a single man but at the time of interview was in a new relationship.

### **5.2 The Prevalence of the Themes**

The ten key themes identified in the analysis were evident in most or all of the participants' narratives as Table 9 shows:

Table 9: Ten Key Themes and their Appearance in participants' narratives

Active service		After active service							Now	
Meta-theme 1: Existential confrontations		Meta-theme 2: Changing							Meta-theme 3: Growth and Resilience	
1.Existential confrontations		2.Changi ng Self	3.Changing priorities	4.Over- whelming emotions	5.Aliena tion	6.Withdrawal & isolation	7. Going to a dark place	8.Breaking down	9.Sharing	10.Hope for the future
James	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
George	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tom	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Greg	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Paul	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dennis	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗		✓	✓	✓
Arthur	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Ron	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
John	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓

In the following sections I describe each of the themes in detail to explain their meaning, using quotes from the participants' narratives to illustrate and define each theme (themes are linked back to the relevant numbered section in the participant's narrative (see number in brackets) for ease of reference). Please note that due to the constraints of a fixed word count, I have chosen the most striking illustrative quotes for themes and have not always included a quote from each of the participants for every theme. Where Table 9 indicates that a particular theme emerged from a participants' account, a relevant quote does exist.

The themes are presented in the order in which they manifested themselves in the psychological journeys of the participants and take the reader through from the way that active service forced them to confront existential givens, through to the changes participants experienced following active service – in themselves, their priorities, their emotions and their behaviours - and the way these impacted on their intimate relationships, and finally their current relationships and the way in which these have been/continue to be affected by active service.

### **5.3 Meta-theme 1: Existential Confrontations**

This meta-theme originally contained two themes: *Expectations versus Reality* and *Existential Confrontations*. The first addressed the reality of active service compared to the expectations the participants had. Although this theme does impact upon the second theme in that it is perhaps the contrast between what participants expected and the reality of their experiences that made their confrontations with existential givens so shocking and discombobulating, it is

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not core to the research question and so has been omitted from this results section for the purposes of my Doctoral research. I plan to revisit it in further research papers at a later stage. I therefore deal only with one theme – Existential Confrontations – within this meta-theme.

#### **5.3.1 Theme 1: Existential Confrontations**

When they described their experiences of active service, the participants spoke about being confronted with death, having to deal with chance and being out of control, and being faced with the meaninglessness and absurdity of war. It is clear that these confrontations with what are essentially existential givens felt abrupt and unexpected, and they proved difficult, challenging and thought provoking for them. For most participants, these confrontations had marked and radical consequences in terms of the way they related to themselves, their way of looking at the world and of course the course of their intimate relationships. This is strongly reflected in Themes 2 and 3, where participants describe the ways their experience changed them and changed their priorities (and therefore their relationships). This theme therefore acts as a foundation theme for what is to follow. It also stands in its own right, however, as many of the participants made explicit connections between their confrontation with existential realities and their relationships.

The mix of existential givens encountered by each participant varies. Apart from George, they all have a confrontation with death and the reality of their own

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mortality in common. Greg describes the moment that death became a reality in a way that gives a sense of how shocking it was to him:

**Greg:** *Because of the job I do, about a day later, 12 hours later we got the casualty list...casualty signal...em, which listed Sheffield's dead and wounded and I must have known 6, 7 or 8 of them and again that's just .... I mean x y....ab....(names a couple of the casualties) em....just mad, absolutely mad. I'd spent time with those guys, getting to know them, socialising with some of them and then, they're not there anymore, they're dead..... (28)*

Paul echoed the bewilderment felt by Greg but his words also demonstrate how little time he has to process the jolting shock of his first confrontation with death before he has to deal with practicalities:

**Paul:** *Well I saw him go down 2 or 3 times.....and...I think the third time he brought...he was told he's not going back down...but then he died. Em, and that was the first em, dead body I'd seen like. But again, because adrenalin and...everything....he...he was dead, there was nothing we could do for him, em.....And I thought, well if people see a dead body, morale might go down so we put him as far forward as we could. And this like, breakwaters stand about a foot and a half tall from the deck. So we put him in front of this and moved everyone back. (28)*

Ron talked solemnly about the experience of having to deal with death's 'close proximity':

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**Ron:** *I had to learn to deal with the close proximity of death during my time at sea in the Falklands. Ships were getting sunk, em, I lost some good friends on another ship when it was hit and it was sunk, em, we lost a couple of aircraft so their crews didn't come back. Em helicopters would land on our ship with sailors from other ships that had been bombed cause we had a larger, em, sick quarters and operating theatre and you'd see them being carried on stretchers across the deck with bloody bandages and blackened clothing..... It's a sobering experience. (50)*

John also talks about initially celebrating the sinking of the Belgrano (an Argentinian Aircraft Carrier) before the reality of what they were facing hit home:

**John:** *People with family and that went back to their pits to write letters home. That was just a sort of 'this is it' now....they were just thinking this is it, this is war you know...people were actually dying now... and that could happen to us....well two days later, it did....(76)*

Tom described the terror that this reality brought as he waited to disembark from the ship he was on, knowing that there were enemy pilots trying to kill him and his colleagues:

**Tom:** *...extreme fear and anxiety, of not knowing...of being unable to deal with that situation. (116)*

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Finally, for some, their confrontation with the possibility of death didn't come until after the hostilities ended or even, as in Dennis's case, until after they had returned home.

**Dennis:** *I was sat at home watching telly because the conflict hadn't finished, had it, and I was sat home watching telly and...about June 4<sup>th</sup>, something like that, and, eh, Glamorgan got hit and one of the...and the put the names of one of the lads that died on there and he'd been on the mess in Gib and I thought...that really brought it home to me cause I just sat there for about an hour cause you weren't out there, so you weren't involved but that, actually seeing it coming across the telly. (44)*

Active service also confronted my participants with the reality that they did not have much control over what happened to them and that regardless of how professionally skilled they were or how much they had prepared, things could happen to them in a random and uncontrollable manner. What seems to have happened is that they became aware of the limitations of their freedom, leaving them with a sense of the contingency of existence and an awareness that it all could be otherwise. Many of the participants used the concepts of luck and/or fate to help describe and understand this confrontation with freedom and finitude.

**Greg:** *When Sir Galahad went down on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June, when she got bombed, in Fitzroy, they lost 50 guys in one hit. Okay, they were, they weren't ships' company but, there was 50 guys on that ship, all Welsh Guards, who perished, in a minute's*

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*worth of madness, em, and sometimes I think about that and I think 'oh my god, you know what, you were so lucky'. (30)*

Tom states that he responded to this confrontation with the contingency of existence by becoming a fatalist and then goes on to say:

**Tom:** *Well, I thought, if....there's nothing I can do....right...who knows if this bomb's going to land on me or land in the water 10 meters away. There's just...you can't do anything. You cannot minimise or change your risk. It's there, isn't it...(118)*

Dennis also adopted a fatalistic approach when reflecting on how a very simple choice he made meant he did not die when a missile hit his ship:

**Dennis:** *Yeah, yeah, well the thing is I didn't get up to make a cup of tea and I was the baby chef and I should get up to make the cup of tea but I, we had a few beers between watch changes and I...I just stayed asleep and didn't get up. If I'd have got up to make a cup of tea, I would have been in the galley at the time. So...and I had been for the last four watch changes...in making a cup of tea. So, but....that's it, it's just, just fate and my dad, cause he passed away about four years ago, but he, his, his thing was and he always told me it, that you're born with a number on your head and when it's time it's time and I firmly believe that... (32)*

Ron rather wryly described his experience of operating in an environment where he couldn't control what happened to him but had to rely to a great extent on chance or luck as '*pretty wearing*':



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**Ron:** *And that all happens very quickly because sometimes, later, em, it would come out of the blue. They would get a radar contact of an aircraft that wasn't identified and it all then had to happen very quickly. And you'd keep doing that, and, it's pretty wearing after a while. Even though the ship was unharmed, you learned later that there was a near miss from a torpedo or another ship got hit by the Exocet missile they were launching at you...(Section 26)*

Paul and Tom also reflected on the fear and anxiety that arose when they realised they were out of control and of the comfort they got from even the illusion of having some control:

**Paul:** *Well we, we stayed on the Arrow overnight and during that time we had, em, an air raid warning and I think I was in the shower, I'd just lathered up like so ....we had to stay down below and em, just wait. If you got hit you wouldn't know about it...it was quite frightening. At least when I was on the GDP (Gun Deck Platform) on the ship I could see what was coming at me, or even briefly, em, I was in the fresh air. (30)*

**Tom:** *I was very, very, happy when I landed ...I could dig a big hole, and get in it. Em...I felt I could have some control on my risk ...I was not involved if you like...I don't know if the threat was lessened or increased, but it felt better. (126)*

Some of the participants demonstrated a clear sense of the absurdity and meaninglessness of their situations, or indeed of the war itself:

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**Paul:** *we also had to paint a black line from the funnel down to the water line on each side of the ship because Argentina had two ships exactly the same as the Sheffield and the funny thing was, them two ships, we were alongside in Portsmouth before we left so, we'd be going over to their gangway, shaking hands with them, saying hello, you know, eh, and the next thing there's a possibility we might be fighting against them. (Section 20)*

**John:** *So we were told sort of, eh, not to let people know....letters home...not to let people know where we are...but we were listening to the radio and the radio told you where we were. (Section 70)*

The disbelief and sense of surrealness felt by many of the participants is clear also in this statement from Arthur, who described dealing with rows and rows of casualties laid out on the ship's deck:

**Arthur:** *You just literally 'so what have I got to do, right next, do it. Next one. What have I got to do next? Do it. Do it. Right what have I got to do? Do it.' Right if you don't do it, the person dies. Get on with it. Then afterwards you sit back and go 'phoof...what have I just done?...What have I just seen?'. (48)*

Tom recalled the use of humour in response to the absurdity he and his colleagues confronted:

**Tom:** *Lot of humour going on.....yes, yeah...em, lot of humour, yeah. We would occasionally, em, get marines coming back who were injured, coming through us from the very front line and back and you'd see, em, I remember, .....there was, em,*

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*we had a black marine, very black, and he came in, and it was at night, and it had been snowing, cause it used to snow quite a lot at night and on top of his hair he had about an inch and a half of snow and quick as a flash another marine said to him 'bloody hell mate, you look just like a pint of Guinness'. So it was...you know...all sorts of humour going on at that level...yeah. (Section 140)*

Greg however recalled his feeling of anger at the meaninglessness of the loss of life, when he returned to the Falkland Islands six months later:

**Greg:** *I resented the place and I'm not sure why, but I just felt a massive resentment at being there. Em, it was chaos, it was still...six months after a war, it's going to be chaos, em, but I just remember it being cold, wet, inhospitable. I was living in a ...a ship in the middle of the harbour that stunk to high heaven and I hadn't imagined that losing my mates for...a place like this was worth it...in the slightest. I was angry...why on earth would you put people at risk for something that I perceived then to be not worth it? (82)*

Arthur and Greg also described an on-going sense of this meaninglessness and futility – indeed the madness - that is war:

**Arthur:** *The active service side, I...memories...when I was attached to a marine unit, em, did a couple of tours with 2 or 3 units, em, when you actually watch somebody get shot. When you see somebody who's stood on a landmine, actually behind them, and watch them go up. That also is a futility, waste of life, and it's something you don't forget. (81)*

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Dennis, John and Arthur all reflected on what appeared to be an on-going search for the meaning behind their survival, finding it difficult it seems to accept the possibility of it being utterly meaningless:

**Dennis:** *And I still don't know to this day, obviously fate, obviously ....just the luck of the draw or whatever, so .... (30).*

**John:** *Sort of, em, questioning like why am I here ...the other guys...the PO ....he had a family as well ...should have been me ....so.... .....So....just em....I don't know...there must be a reason somewhere...just haven't found it. (169/171)*

**Arthur:** *Doesn't stop me from every so often thinking oooh, what would have happened if? Do you remember this? Back into the active service, the shooting role, you know. Would it have made any difference, you know, at the time, when that fellow stood on that landmine? What happens if I'd been in front? How come, out of a four man patrol, I was the one who came back?....How did that.....why?....who gave me the right to survive? But now, I can look back and say well.....everything happens for a reason. Don't quite know what the reason is sometimes. (194)*

Some of the participants reported explicitly that these encounters with existential givens made them think differently about relationships. John stated he probably wouldn't have got married had he not experienced active service and that he got married not long after his return because:

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**John:** *Em, life's too short, probably, cause, me nearly getting killed on the ship and then had a nasty motorbike smash...and eh, a few years later found out I'm a diabetic as well and I had that....they diagnosed that just in time apparently ....reckoned another couple of days and I'd have been dead ...so.. (144)*

James described how the possibility of his own death made him realize that he wanted children who would remember him when he was dead:

**James:** *....one of my, one of my real lasting memories was considering the fact that, em, having I suppose experienced being close to death, that if I had died, my, the memory of me, would have been really quite short term. ....So I suppose in my head, em, my feeling was that the people that would really remember you would be my children. (96/154)*

For Arthur, his encounter with death made relationships a risky prospect and therefore something he felt less open to going forward.

**Arthur:** *I knew, it was, the real, I was a young sailor remember, so all of a sudden, it became real. Servicemen actually did die. In fact they'd been dying since armed forces were first designed in 18 hundred and frozen stiff but... and people had died since then. But that was never... they died in a book. They died in a film. They didn't die in real life. But all of a sudden, they did. And I then thought to myself actually, this could have been me, could easily happen to me. Did I want to get too close to somebody, if something happened to me? (89)*

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Finally, for Tom, who was in an established and close relationship with two young children before going on active service, his awareness of the random nature of existence enhanced both his life and his relationship, helping him support his wife when she was experiencing difficult times:

**Tom:** *I think probably ...I think it might of enhanced it in that it's made us both reflect on joy rather than going through, you know, routine and mundane. Em, I think it helped me support Lucy in her career, she had quite a tough job ....I'd say a very, very tough job towards the end. (170)*

### 5.4: Meta-theme 2: Changing

As we saw in Theme 1 above, many of the participants in this research experienced a stark and unexpected confrontation with some of the universal givens of existence during or after their time on active service. All of the participants were changed by this in some way, and for many of them their priorities in life also changed. For some, their confrontation with death, freedom and finitude and meaningless and absurdity, provoked a complete or partial collapse in their worldview and the values that made it up, and they found themselves in what appears to be existential crisis, overwhelmed by difficult emotions such as shame, anger and anxiety. Attempts to deal with these overwhelming feelings through drinking, fighting, or withdrawing from the world and from their partners failed and after many years trying to carry on as normal, struggling to hide the impact active service had had upon them, many of the participants found themselves in what one participant described as '*a dark*

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place' (George, 54). This meta-theme consists of seven themes that represent this journey as it emerged from the participants' narratives.

### 5.4.1 Theme 2: Changing Self

Active service changed all of the participants in some way – their values, worldview, behaviours, etc. - and therefore changed their approach to, behaviour within, and feelings about, their intimate relationships. Something that either the participants themselves or their partners recognized and later described was the idea that they had come back as different people to the people that left a few weeks or months earlier. This suggests there were some fairly fundamental shifts in their ways of being in the world.

Tom was unusual in that he described the changes in himself - and in his relationship as a result - in positive terms.

**Tom:** *I think because I'd had that experience it might well have improved my character and understanding and resilience and if I can be resilient I can probably help her be resilient. (172)*

John also described the changes in him in ostensibly positive terms, though there was a sense of sadness in his tone that indicated that this change also involved loss.

**John:** *Probably made me grow, made me grow up a bit more....I don't know, I mean...just get all the silly bits out of the way, sort of thing...you know...that you do*

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*when you're sort of, eh, 19. Responsibilities now as well, getting married and that, trying to put things in order....so....(140)*

For the rest of the participants, the changes in themselves were not positive ones.

**Ron:** *I realise now that of course it changed me. Psychologically I suppose is the word. I'm not a psychologist, however, and I know other service people who were there, and who've been in other wars felt the same. The big problem I had when I came back, still in the Navy, when I came back from the Falklands was that I found it very difficult to settle. Everything that I did on a day-to-day basis became mundane and not as rewarding and I felt restless. I know other people have said the same thing after being at war, coming back to peacetime routines is difficult too, and I guess there's no adrenalin anymore... (62)*

**Greg:** *Eh...I think I became more callous. And a little bit more....gung ho if you want. A little bit....life wasn't as precious as it was then, you know...when you lose mates...it's really precious...but mine didn't feel like it was..... Em, I lost a spark though....I lost a spark....and I think it took a long, long time for that spark to come back. (78)*

James described the way he'd change around the time of the key anniversaries such as the date of his ship was hit.

**James:** *Probably became a bit more moody, bit more sullen, eh, withdrew into myself, didn't want to really talk to anybody. Em, you know, em, got into this bit*



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*where nobody really understood, probably, I'm not going to talk to anybody cos you don't really understand so....just leave me the hell alone. (200)*

He noted the negative impact this had on his relationship with his wife, who walked around 'on eggshells' (202) during this period:

**James:** *(She was) probably thinking about 'what do I say, what do I not say' you know, what's, I suppose, what's the trigger that's going to set the grenade off here, or are we going to have a month where it doesn't explode this year? (204).*

Other participants also noted the impact the changes in themselves had on their relationships:

**George:** *The impact on my relationship, even though I started it in 82....just devastating. I...I couldn't....as if I couldn't cope with a close emotional bond with anybody, anymore.....But to go from being a loving boyfriend, fiancé, eh, to suddenly, changing to a person that I couldn't even love or respect myself, or even like and to put that out on to another person, that's totally devastating and totally destroying to see that actually....see that I destroyed a loving person as well. (98)*

**Arthur:** *....saw a lot of things, both on active service and during the search and rescue roles that I probably wish I hadn't seen. Which has definitely affected me. But it's also affected me on positive and negative. It's...from a negative perspective it's certainly affected my relationships. It's affected me and how I go about things, even to this day. (38)*

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Three of the participants pointed out that although they may not have noticed the changes in themselves following active service, their wives/partners had noticed.

**Paul:** *Em, and then I used to go down the pub, started like going down the pub, where I'd meet up with other lads from the ship and they're the only people you'd trust. Wouldn't trust anybody else, eh, and then you'd get...you'd get it off your chest like, you know... Saying 'I've been doing this...I've been arguing' you know saying, wife would be saying 'you've come back a different man' like, you know...(54)*

**Arthur:** *Yeah, she, she said I was a different person. She was saying that I was much more, eh, stand offish, abrupt, em, regimented... (123)*

**Ron:** *...many years later, when we were quietly divorcing she said 'you weren't the same person when you came back'. But I didn't realise that. That was the problem. (54)*

#### 5.4.2 Theme 3: Active Service Changed Their Priorities

As well as changing who they felt they were, or who their partners thought they were, participants reported that active service changed their priorities in life, making some things that they previously valued very highly less important, and other things that had seemed unimportant/ things to consider in the future, suddenly became more of a priority.

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Tom talked about how, after his return from active service, he and his wife prioritised the important things in life and had little time for people who did not take the same stance:

**Tom:** *I don't ...from then I didn't tolerate crap at work. You know, particularly later in civilian life when people were saying this that or the other I took ....'dear me...you've got no idea'. I just didn't tolerate it at all. So it makes you think 'what is important in life' and what isn't. ....It's made us both reflect on joy rather than going through, you know, routine...(158/170)*

Ron reflected on a how his priorities within a relationship changed from avoiding conflict towards avoiding compromising on what was important to him. He seemed to be more committed to living life authentically and according to his values:

**Ron:** *I wasn't prepared to .....to easily make compromises in my personal and professional life for the sake of peace and quiet. I'd be more...more likely to approach things more directly because...generally in my life, emotionally and professionally, prior to that experience, I would try to sidestep conflict.....perhaps in my first marriage I felt 'well you're married, you have to get on with it even though it's not much fun any more'...(110)*

Greg talked about how feeling loved and confident in his relationship (as demonstrated by receiving letters and packages from his wife) became very important during active service, describing how badly he felt when he didn't receive much mail:

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**Greg:** *Yeah, I didn't get very many letters at all. I know a lot of people didn't get very many letters down there at all, em, if I'm honest I felt a little bit neglected by her. A little bit a case of out of sight out of mind if you will. Other guys were getting letters. Obviously the mail situation was horrible anyway so when you did get mail on board, one of the worst things that could happen to you is that you didn't get any. Generally speaking because of the sort of delay that you did experience you did get some but I had seen guys getting handfuls of letters and that wasn't happening for me, you know,...goody boxes from home...  
...Horrible...horrible...feels like nobody cares about you. Here you are in the middle of nowhere, and .....nobody gives a shit to be honest. Em, so that felt....awful...yeah...  
(62/64)*

Some of the other participants described active service as having changed the priority they placed on having a relationship. For James and Dennis, it made having a relationship more of a priority than it had been prior to active service, when freedom and adventure were more of a focus:

**James:** *I think there was a couple of things, em, it probably accelerated it quicker in terms of, having been close to death, wanting to get married, wanting a family and everything else. Eh probably accelerated, eh, my thinking towards 'that's the next big thing I need to do' if you like, if there's a box in life I need to tick, I need to do this, and now, as soon as I can. (158)*

**Dennis:** *Well I did, I thought, time to settle down now. I've done 6 and a half years. I've been through this, been through that and.... (70)*

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Dennis elaborated on this later when he said that independence would probably have been his priority had he not seen active service:

**Dennis:** *I've, well because I had a lot of different plans and stuff, like I said, I'd have probably felt I was independent enough after two and a half years to move out and move in on me own, and I don't think that would have been in a relationship, wise, I think that would have been probably on my own. (114)*

George also focused on his return on establishing relationships, getting engaged, then breaking up with his fiancé to enter into a new relationship with a shipmate's sister, all within a few weeks of returning home, despite a sense that he was somehow not in a fit state of mind to do so:

**George:** *I broke off the engagement cause, like that ...I didn't really ...know now why I did get engaged cause, eh, really I don't think I should have been making a decision like that so soon after coming back from a...combat zone, you know...going through what we went through that day and subsequent weeks. I don't think my, well I know my mind wasn't there. (56)*

Like George, John found a relationship progressing very quickly despite feeling preoccupied with his experiences on active service:

**John:** *It's just things ....things were just happening too fast....I mean...eh, just coming home, got a girlfriend, finance, getting married sort of was thinking about the ship and all that sort of stuff, my experiences on there. (122)*

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For Arthur, the increased sense of his own mortality he experienced as a result of active service (see Theme 1, above), together with a heightened sense of independence as a result, made relationships less of a priority:

**Arthur:** *I came back, I could say grown up, and I came back with a very, much more independent ...approach. But apart from independent, I didn't feel I wanted anybody getting close to me, and I didn't want to get close to anybody else, probably because I realised that ...I could have been one of those people that were killed. (87)*

He also commented on how things would have been different in his relationships had he not seen active service and felt the need to prioritise independence:

**Arthur:** *I think things would have been different because...I probably wouldn't have, because if I hadn't had those experiences which formulated in my mind, which focused me to become an indep, sort of independent, or reinforced them, and to put those barriers up, I think it could well be different. ....I mean I certain...if I didn't have those experiences, certainly my approach to sharing that life would have been different. (111)*

#### 5.4.3 Theme 4: Overwhelming Emotions

All the participants except Tom reported experiencing a range of overwhelming emotions following their return from active service. At the time of active service Tom was older than most of the other participants and had been married for

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many years. He was also the only Navy Royal Marine Commando included in the research.

**Tom:** *And that's why I said I might be a very boring subject for you, cause I can't think of ...you know...I didn't...it didn't...you know...I didn't come back....I didn't...I don't think it impacted strongly on me emotionally.* (162)

There is a sense throughout Themes 1, 2 and 3 that many of the participants experienced active service as a shattering of their worldview, requiring a radical shift in the way they experienced the world and the way they experienced their lives within that world. As highlighted in the introduction to Meta-theme 2, for many of the participants, this led them into an existential crisis, which hit them emotionally, initially at the point of transition out of active service and back into normal life/regular military service but also on an ongoing basis.

For all the participants except Tom and Dennis, the initial and most dominant emotion was that of shame – something that arose from feelings of failure and a deeply felt sense that they had let their colleagues down in some way.

**James:** *It, it, it was, em, a real sense of failure and also, a little bit, from me, embarrassment, about, em, not coming back on the ship, you know there was this big thing in the papers it's the first ship that's been hit since the second world war and if I'm honest it wasn't something that I felt particularly, know you, proud of...* (132)

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**George:** *I mean we came back to, like, a heroes welcome, with the families and everything coming off that airplane. But I felt ashamed because we came back without our shipmates and our ship. (40)*

**Greg:** *I'm not sure what that was put down to, whether I was feeling guilty about not being able to help a little bit more or not being a hero because, you know what, that term was being bandied about a lot, you know and I didn't necessarily feel like a hero cause I didn't think I'd done anything to warrant that sort of, em, adulation or praise or whatever it was. (78)*

**Arthur:** *I felt useless, cause I couldn't actually do anything for them, where I was and... a lot of people were losing their lives. (63)*

**Ron:** *I didn't want...I didn't feel I'd done anything to deserve that (being called a hero). I'd just gone away, done my job and come back. I wasn't injured. Nothing heroic. Em, there's plenty of people who've been hurt, who've got medals and all sorts of stuff, who were very brave under terrible conditions. I had none of that to contend with so please leave me out of all this. (68)*

**Paul:** *And there wasn't a day goes by where I didn't think about the incident, the guilt I felt at surviving.*

**John:** *Wish I could of done more...you know...I bet we all do...I mean...just sat at home with lots of mates down there...but ....so.... (221)*

As outlined in the literature review earlier, the relationship between shame and anger has been the focus of a great deal of theoretical discussion. It may be that



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this is why so many of the participants (six of nine) described experiencing anger and rage on their return from active service, anger and rage that had a devastating effect on their relationships:

**James:** *I was never, again, very good at eh, expressing how I really feel, felt, until it came to a head, which it invariably did, it was a, fit of rage, anger, you know, real fits of anger, outbursts everything else, then we're getting to that bit where, you know, I'm guilty, I feel guilty for what I've displayed and everything else, and I'm sure that Gloria was just like 'pew' this is, you know, this freaks me out when this happens, I don't really like it, all the rest of it. (178)*

**Greg:** *I wasn't talking about it, eh, I wasn't attending remembrance events, I wasn't attending reunions, em, I just wanted to shut myself off from it, em, and then I would get upset at something I'd seen on tv....'you've never talked about it before, what's the problem now?' and I'd flash and get enraged. I'd get angry that she wouldn't understand why every once in a while, I would get upset about it. (106)*

**George:** *I got very, very angry. And, eh, I couldn't control the anger sometimes. And eh, unfortunately, I ....I took it out on my partner, eh, verbally, not just physically and that...at times, eh....I hit her a couple of times and...but a lot of the time it was verbal....verbal abuse to her. (42)*

**Paul:** *I was angry with why I was reacting, like, why am I crying, em....why am I bad tempered. Although Becky was, my daughter was, about 3, em, I used to ...if I asked to get things done, I wanted them done there and then. Em, and I'd raise...I'd*

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*never raise me hands, never smacked them, I'd raise my voice, em. If I run out of cigarettes I'd get a bad mood on, I'd storm out. (50)*

**Arthur:** *Well to me, I just went to the point I went phew...up the wall, that's it, you know, this is not right. I need to get out of this. And then, I did. And I think to a point that lasted then for almost 10 years. (170)*

**John:** *I used to get into rows...used to smash up me insulin bottles and go out for runs and things like that...without any sugars...and things like that and eh, she took a hard time. (167)*

As the quote from Ron (below) demonstrates, there was a sense from some of the participants that emotions generally (not just shame and anger) were difficult or impossible to control or hide.

**Ron:** *I suddenly found myself very easily moved to tears by certain sounds, certain music, em, some things if I saw them on TV. I felt I had all this emotion sloshing around inside me but I couldn't...I couldn't channel it or control it the way I wanted to always. (62)*

**Paul:** *It...it...I felt like I was losing it, em, and eh, I wasn't .....I was hiding behind my position as a Petty Officer but really, inside, I was a nervous wreck and people would see me and say oh there's Paul, he's a good laugh like, but inside here (points at head) it...it's just like scrambled egg, everything's set all over the place, eh.... (80)*

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**George:** ....not being able to release it...not having that safety valve to release the pressure and just let the pressure or the overflow, like you get, like even on a ....you get a sink an you're filling it up with water and it will never overflow because it's got the overflow on and that's stopping...your mind in your human body is able to do as well when it's...to me when it's operating near normal it...you have an overflow and it helps to release so it doesn't build up and stop there, stop there (signals the top of his head) just to suddenly explode on you, which for me it eventually did. (78)

For George, the lack of control he felt over his emotions resulted in him feeling anxious, which both exhausted and angered him, again with consequences for his relationship:

**George:** I started getting panicky as such, having what now I know is panic attacks in shops, eh, couldn't cope with the noise and all the people around me but at the time...I...it was just wearing me down...it wore me down. Course then I'd get sort of upset, instead of being just upset, get into Mandy then I was upset...I would get ...the anger would come out again the frustration I would transfer it, my issues and my problem, on to Mandy. (88)

Finally, Greg commented on how his wife struggled to cope with his emotional state:

**Greg:** I've never spoken to her about that post...immediate post conflict, Falklands Conflict scenario but I'm not sure, I'm not sure she could just cope with it. I'm not

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*sure she knew how to cope with it. She was only, em, 18, 19, same as I was. And that's a difficult thing to be able to cope with. (72).*

#### 5.4.4 Theme 5: Alienation

With the exception of Tom and Dennis, the participants returned from active service with a sense that no one would be able to understand what they had experienced. They felt different from those who did not share their experiences, estranged from those they might previously have felt close to, alienated and isolated in a world that had no connection to the world of the Navy and active service. Even the Navy itself, previously a place of camaraderie and support, a second or even a primary family for many of the men, became, as Greg describes below, a Navy of two halves, where only those that had been deployed in the Falklands could understand what they had experienced.

**Greg:** *Em...I was different. Em, cause I'd done something, seen things, experienced things...that not many people around me had experienced. I think we became a Navy of two halves after the Falklands. We became a Navy of people that had served there and done it and a Navy of people that hadn't. (74)*

In the first few days and weeks after their return from active service, many of the participants found themselves feeling uncomfortable and out of place with their families or girlfriends. George describes feeling disassociated and absent when his girlfriend hugged him.

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**George:** *Then obviously my girlfriend got me in a hug but....I couldn't hug them back. I didn't feel it...not when I touched them, you know, I did put my arms....put my arms round them...but I didn't feel anything, as if I wasn't there. Me body was there but not there inside... (46)*

Greg echoed these sentiments when he described feeling out of place and that he didn't fit in at home any more.

**Greg:** *And it...and I don't know how to explain it, but I felt like a fish out of water. I felt like I didn't belong at home. I felt as though I belonged back with the lads. (68)*

Ron felt emotionally distant and unconnected to his wife, which surprised and disappointed him.

**Ron:** *But then what I discovered was, my relation...I ...I found it terribly difficult to re-establish emotional contact with my wife. And I was really looking forward to getting home. And then, it was a huge disappointment, and I could not understand why, em... (52)*

As time went on, many of the participants felt that their wives or partners couldn't or wouldn't understand what they had been through on active service and how it had impacted upon them. Reading through a scrapbook of newspaper cuttings about the Conflict, which his wife had collated, Greg recalled that he began to sob:

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**Greg:** *And I don't know what I expected from her, and she was quite young as well, I'm not sure whether that's the case of whether she didn't know how to deal with that or not but....no comfort at all. No 'there there, it's okay, I know that must have been really terrible for you'. (68)*

James talked about taking his wife to a memorial service in the vain hope that she would understand some of what he felt.

**James:** *I was hoping that by her experiencing it she'd understand a little bit of what it was like in terms....you can describe something but I think the only time you really experience it is when you witness it. (210)*

Dennis also longed for his wife to understand what he had been through but reported that because they had experienced a tragedy together in their family, she minimized his experiences of active service.

**Dennis:** *Any other death or any other situation I'd been in wasn't as big as that situation; mine wasn't nothing at all, you know... (126)*

While James and Dennis initially sought understanding from their wives, other participants concluded that their partners would not understand what they had experienced and that it was pointless therefore to try to explain.

**Arthur:** *So, unless you've actually had that experience, to me you will never understand it. You might think you understand it. You might have a perception of what it's like. But you don't know how that individual felt about that situation.*

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*And...hence I'd fail to see the point of telling anybody, so they didn't have to think about it cause they couldn't really understand it. (119)*

Paul rebuffed any attempts by his wife to get him to talk about what had happened in the Falklands, preferring to go on long walks by himself, seeking out strangers who might understand.

**Paul:** *And I might sit in one of the shelters on the beach. And there might be an old couple there and I'd start chatting to them and....deliberately asking whether they were involved in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War or...and eh, talking about my experience. And that's the only people I'd talk to, like, people who'd gone through a similar disaster or experience. (50)*

### 5.4.5 Theme 6: Withdrawal and Isolation

Many of the participants, feeling increasingly alienated from anyone who hadn't served with them in the Falkland Islands, and unable to share the overwhelming emotions provoked by their experiences, withdrew into themselves, retreating from their partners, backing out of social engagements with them or choosing to spend time away from home. (Only Dennis, Tom and John's accounts did not contain this theme.)

James, George and Arthur described their withdrawal in terms of shutting down, protecting themselves and others from the overwhelming emotions they were feeling.

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**James:** *I just totally withdrew.....don't talk to me, just leave me alone....*

*Withdrawing for me is shutting down...we'll have a conversation but, yep, no, whatever....that's all you're going to get from me....(228/230)*

**George:** *I couldn't even show any emotions cause I was more and more withdrawing into meself ...isolating myself...building a wall around myself...as if I could protect myself that way (110)*

**Arthur:** *I've shut people away. I don't like people getting close to me. I put a wall around me. I feel...safe. I feel....protected from people trying to get too close to me, so ultimately I know I'm not going to disappoint them, or hurt them, if something happens to me. So it's as much protection for somebody else. That wall's not just to keep people out, as to keep me in. (97)*

Paul, Arthur and Ron actively sought to spend time away from their partners, seeking to escape, to isolate themselves and avoid feeling trapped.

**Paul:** *I didn't want to talk about what I'd seen, heard, what I went through. Em....but then every day, I was reliving what had happened on that day. See the fireball coming, eh, and I used to isolate myself a lot. Em.....it...it....I used to go out for long walks because I was, I was, I was getting het up. (50)*

**Arthur:** *When people started getting too close, I mean, em, well in my first marriage. It was ....this sounds like a joke...you were happily married for 15 years then the welfare force you to go home on leave. I, I was happy whilst I was away.*



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*The moment I came back I thought 'oh, this is all very claustrophobic, this is not good. Getting too close'.(101)*

**Ron:** *I think I was trying to cover something up and I was throwing myself into my hobbies. I had an old motorcycle, a motorbike, and I loved amateur theatre, and I was doing a lot of it, which meant I didn't have to be at home very much in the evening. And maybe, subconsciously, I was escaping from being at home. (58)*

While James also took opportunities to escape into work or hobbies, he also described a more passive form of withdrawal, a way of being with his partner physically but not connecting with her or being with her emotionally.

**James:** *We'd have conversations but they, em, I would never really share anything in terms of how I felt, eh, I would, you know, if Amber wanted to do something I'd go 'oh, yeah, okay, whatever you want to do that's fine' ....little resistance, where as, where part of me might be going 'I don't really want to be doing this. I don't really want to do this'. Em, and I, I was sort of, em, quite passive and some points and, em, we never really, I mean, she never asked but I never, em spoke about what happened down the Falklands or anything else. (126)*

Paul put the failure of his first marriage down to him not sharing his feelings and emotions with his wife, who then divorced him for unreasonable behaviour.

**Paul:** *And then....it was because I wouldn't, I wouldn't talk about anything...em...our relationship was, em, I could see it going down the pan but eh, I didn't want it to finish.... because, I didn't want to get divorced...em...I didn't want*

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*to lose my kids or anything like that. And eh, it wasn't till our next mail drop, then I got a brown envelope saying you know she wanted a divorce for unreasonable behaviour and I just accepted it. You know, I thought, she's better off without me like, you know, but as long as I can see me kids I'll be alright. (56)*

He vowed not to withdraw and hide his thoughts and emotions when he got married the second time:

**Paul:** *We ended up getting married and I thought 'I'm not divorcing this one' and eh, again, I bottled it up and yet again...and, again...because I'd bottled it up, and again, seven years down the line...divorce. (74)*

Greg and Arthur also blamed the breakdown of marriages on the fact that they had withdrawn and isolated themselves from their partners.

**Greg:** *It could well be that I'd gone that far inside myself that there was no getting to me. Because we didn't have a particularly strong physical relationship, em. You know, you think about things, don't you, after the event, to try and work out....like something particular happened for a reason and I think that might have been it. It think it might have been me that actually cut off. We're all really good at blaming other people for the relationship breakdown, for relationship breakdowns happening but .....I think that was probably my fault. (94)*

**Arthur:** *I still blame myself. I know there's always two sides to every story, em, but I found, I blame myself because of that barrier I put up, that protective wall. Protecting me from them, protecting them from me. Either way you look at it it's a*

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*barrier. And....and....so you know, that can't be good in any relationship, that barrier. (145)*

#### **5.4.6 Theme 7: Going to a dark place**

All of the participants except Tom and Dennis talked about spending years trying to hide the impact that active service had upon them, trying to carry on their lives as normal, as if nothing had changed. Feeling alienated from their families, friends and partners, many participants were disappointed to find that their efforts to carry on did not reduce their overwhelming feelings of shame, anger or confusion. They also continued to experience problems with flashbacks and/or nightmares, re-experiencing sights, sounds and smells from their time at war.

George, Greg, Paul and Arthur described provided vivid descriptions of the flashbacks and nightmares they experienced and described how they affected their relationships with their partners.

**George:** *I woke up one morning and I had my hands round her neck. She had marks on her neck and....the only thing I can remember from that night...and I can't even remember why...she said I was having a nightmare as if I was trying to get out of a smoke filled compartment on the ship. And...why I grabbed her...maybe I thought ...I mean I didn't even know I'd grabbed her, genuinely didn't know that. Had a...maybe I'm thinking I'm grabbing hold of something to get out of this compartment. (64)*

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**Greg:** *Em, and then I started to have dreams, flashbacks, nightmares. ...I dreamt that I was one of the lads that had died in a hit, em, I've never been so scared in my life and I started to smell smells, the smells that I'd smelt ...seeing sights that I'd seen ...not just asleep....I remember, she had two kids, did this lady. And I'd got, eh, my two kids were living with my ex, eh, and we'd gone down to, em... we'd stayed in Cornwall in a caravan... Em and as we were walking through the entrance there's a woody bit, a leafy bit, it was quite overcast, em, a bit nippy, as we were in the forestry...got overflown by two Harriers and I hit the deck. Don't know where it came from. I just hit the deck, took cover, em, it's hard to explain how that makes you feel...I felt so much less of a man. Eh, and she told me later, after we'd broken up, that was one of the determining factors that decided it. She didn't see me as that guy any more who could protect her in the way that I had initially.*

(122/124)

**Paul:** *And we lived, as I say, we lived in a married patch and up there there's a gunnery range, well I was playing in the garden with my daughter and I was throwing her up and catching her. And then a rocket went off, and as she's in mid air, this rocket went off, I just hit the deck and she fell on top of me. Cried her eyes out for ages. I cried because I thought why did I do that, you know, why...I've dropped her, have I hurt her? Em...and it..it really frightened me. Em, and I stormed out of the house. (50)*

**Arthur:** *Oh they had a huge impact on her. Huge. The early days, the early ones. Huge. Em, I'd literally wake, say for the first six months, I'd wake up, I'd see these burnt bodies coming towards me and I'd be batt...I'd be doing this in the night,*

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*batting them away and I'd wake up in a cold sweat and that went on for several years ..... to live with that must have been hell for her because apart from the fact that she wasn't sleeping, young kids, as it was disturbing her, she obviously, I would imagine, felt quite helpless. There's nothing she could do, even if she want...I presume she wanted to. Em, but when it happened I wouldn't talk about it....very much affected, must have affected that relationship. (139)*

Five of the participants went through a period of drinking heavily in an attempt to either drown out difficult thoughts and emotions or to allow them to express them in the form of angry outbursts.

**Greg:** *I went through a period of drinking quite heavily. Em...fighting. Not with me mates but just getting quite aggressive ashore. (100)*

John talked about drinking to try to block out some of his memories:

**John:** *....the things we went through, sort of thing, you know....seeing people melting and all that sort of stuff. (112)*

George also described a change in drinking patterns as an attempt to cope with what he described as 'the darkness':

**George:** *I never used to do that ...then ...wait till the pub opened and then go back to the pub. I'd sometimes supplement it with cans of beer you know I.. but thankfully after about a month of that I realised I wasn't doing any good, as such. It was just...it was masking it for a while then...the darkness would come back again...the bad thoughts, the guilt, the shame would come back ... (58)*

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John, James and Paul also described the challenges their drinking created for their relationships:

**John:** *I really had a drink problem then and that as well...used to get into rows...she took a hard time. (167)*

**James:** *It was very difficult for her, because I probably, I wasn't very good at expressing how I felt apart from, eh, getting drunk, and then going through that whole process of 'I'm happy, I'm sad, I want a fight'. (146)*

**Paul:** *...you go out for a pint like, go out and I...I couldn't just have a pint, I'd have to have five or something like that, you know, and eh, she, was getting fed up with me drinking, em, I was trying to talk about what I was going through and em, I just couldn't get it out. So again, the thought...this time...she'd be better off without me...not from me committing suicide but me just leaving her and...and gong on. Eh, we didn't have children, and eh, so we called it a day. (78)*

Two participants, George and Paul, described being aggressive or verbally abusive to their partners as they struggled to deal with the emotional and physical consequences of their experiences of active service.

**George:** *Well, I used to call her names. You know, I ...like I said...she was a beautiful lady... she was a beautiful young lady and she was so loving and caring and very intelligent as well. But I used to call her dumb and I used to call her ugly...and she wasn't ugly. Eh...I used to criticise her if the dinner didn't taste right...now to me that is mental abuse, emotional abuse. That was me trying to*

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*take over and that was me...now I know with my, you know, inadequacy to communicate my feelings properly I was taking things out on her, which now I know is totally wrong. But at that time, again, I felt like two different people. (88)*

**Paul:** *...apparently my mood swings and em, my tone of voice to people, em, argumentative to my wife, em, you know and....it was em....before the divorce like I was eh, because I couldn't talk about things....as well as the anger management thing. (82)*

George also talked about becoming physically violent towards his wife, as did Greg.

**George:** *I was...it's such a dark place...that I just lashed out at her. She's said something and I can't remember exactly what it is, but I'm thinking it was just such an innocent comment but I....did not hear it like that. It may have been something...a comment...that I felt was a total criticism of me or something, for some reason, and I just pchewww (makes explosive sound)...swung my arm out and, eh, I knocked her, I knocked her down on the floor and...I was just literally standing there, shaking and everything and I could look....I could see the look of fear in her eyes and....I....I ...I remember thinking 'what the hell have you done George. What have you done to that person there. Lying on the floor. With that fear in her eyes...to you'. ...I've got three children who I don't see from different relationships, because of breaking up with their... the wives and eh, the result of my actions and the way I treated them verbally, not just physically but verbally abusing them and making our lives hell. (92/54)*

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**Greg:** *That was ....the early years of that relationship were really, really turbulent. Mood swings, violence...I offered her violence...yep, em....purely because I think she doesn't understand what the Falklands was all about. (106)*

For many of my participants, then, these were times of desperation and deep despair. Perhaps George sums up the experiences of these participants most vividly:

**George:** *I...I just felt empty...I felt empty inside as if...and there was just blackness in there. I couldn't see the world like I had seen it before. I couldn't see the sunshine. I couldn't see the happiness that was in the world. (60)*

### **5.4.7 Theme 8: Breaking Down**

This theme describes what happened to six of the participants for whom active service resulted, ultimately, in a breaking down of their ability to function in their day-to-day lives. All six individuals described struggling for many years to understand and cope with the ways in which active service changed their ways of being in the world and in turn impacted upon their intimate relationships, ending up as described above in a dark place, before a further traumatic experience or stressful life event/events took them beyond the limits of their resilience and into crisis. For five of the six, this crisis resulted in a formal diagnosis of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, as Table 10 below indicates.



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Table 10. Participant Breakdown and PTSD

Participant	Experience of breaking down	Trigger	Years between active service & breakdown	Formal diagnosis of PTSD
James	Yes	Death of his father	30 years	Yes
George	Yes	Challenging job in which he felt unsupported	29 years	Yes
Tom	No	-	-	No
Greg	Yes	Motorbike accident	23 years	Yes
Paul	Yes	War simulation exercise	12 years	Yes
Dennis	No	-	-	No
Arthur	No	-	-	No
Ron	Yes	Wife's serious illness & financial problems	30 years	Yes
John	Yes	Unemployment	6 years	No

Thirty years after active service James' father died. James returned to work a few days later. He described his experience of reaching the end of the road in somewhat understated terms when he tells of visiting his GP later on that day.

**James:** *So (I) went to see the doctor saying 'look'....so I had a chat with him saying 'I feel alright but I don't feel alright, this, that and the other' eh, at which point, after I'd spoken to him he went 'I'm signing you off work for two weeks'. .....Went to the Veterans' Mental Health and Welfare, em, .....and I ended up with ....about six months off work, if I'm honest. (242)*

George described his decision to start to attend a few reunions and memorial services with his shipmates and feeling that perhaps they were helping him in some way, when lack of support in a new and challenging job led to what he describes as a breakdown (102), 29 years after active service.

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**George:** *I finished up at work an hour early, eh, and I was over at the local pub by the factory having a quiet drink .....and I was sat in this pub and I just started crying. I just felt so drained, physically and emotionally and I started shaking and I thought 'what the hell's going on here?' ..... I literally broke down, literally couldn't function any more. (104)*

For Greg, breaking down occurred after a motorbike accident 23 years after active service in the Falkland Islands.

**Greg:** *It was something, em....then I had my motorbike accident in 2005, coming to work here... and that was two years...it was horrible, absolutely horrible....I nearly lost the leg. Em, and then I started to have dreams, flashbacks, nightmares. On the second night that I was in hospital and my leg had just been operated on, em, I dreamt that I was one of the lads that had died in a hit, em, I've never been so scared in my life, em, and I started to smell smells, the smells that I'd smelt ...seeing sights that I'd seen ...not just asleep. That could...something could happen outside, a car could backfire and it would be straight back to where you were. (122)*

Paul was still in the Navy in 1994 (12 years after active service) when he took part in a military exercise with the RAF in which he was in the radar room on board a ship as a simulated attack from the air took place. He describes feeling unable to go back to sea after this exercise.

**Paul:** *It felt like I was losing it and eh, I wasn't....I was hiding behind my position as a Petty Officer but really, inside, I was a nervous wreck and people would see me*

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*and say 'oh there's Paul, he's a good laugh like', but inside here (points at his head) it...it's just liked scrambled egg, everything's set all over the place.... (80)*

Ron describes his experience of coming to the point of breakdown (following his wife's serious illness and their financial difficulties) through the eyes of his wife.

**Ron:** *And she said afterwards that she was really worrying about me. She was running her own little suicide watch on me cause I was at home unemployed. ....My wife tells me I wake up in the night shouting, and I'm drinking a lot and I'm depressed. (80)*

Finally, John talked about breaking down during an extended period of unemployment. In particular he highlighted the fact that he would clean the house only to find his wife would come home from work and clean it again. This led to a crisis where he was tempted to self harm by not managing his diabetes, all of which he describes here:

**John:** *So I was wasting my time really....making me feel even more useless than what I was cause I couldn't get a job. So....first of all I just started throwing insulin bottles in the, in the, bin...she fished them out the bin, put them back in the fridge....so in the end I just sort of got them out of the bin and just jumped on them....smashed them all up. (177)*

Having broken down and sought help, five of my research participants received a formal diagnosis of PTSD over the coming months.

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James confirmed his diagnosis after I had stopped recording the interview with him (but he confirmed he was happy for this diagnosis to be included in my findings in an email exchange following conclusion of our interview). He alludes to this diagnosis when he talks about working with veteran mental health services having been '*freaked out*' (242) by a couple of events including his attendance at Remembrance Sunday parade for the first time.

**James:** *But then I ...and again, something else happened, I think the week after, eh, that freaked me out a bit. Em, so I went back to see the Veterans' Mental Health and then they...I basically stayed with them for 12 months and got discharged last November. (246)*

**Greg:** *I had a diagnosis of PTSD in 2008, and I'm almost convinced, the reason why I got it, and I've spoken to quite a few guys who've got the same condition, and went through the same experience as me, who then were treated the same as I was when the ship got to Ascension and we flew home really quickly out of that environment of danger. Awfulness, visions and sights and sounds that you NEVER want to experience again. Taking you from that theatre in 24 or 48 hours and put you back home where nobody understands what it was like. How can they? Nobody knows how to deal with you. (68)*

After persistently getting into trouble with the Military Police for failing to turn up to his work on time, Paul was finally diagnosed with PTSD when a new Divisional Officer noticed his records stated that he had been in the Falklands' War and encouraged Paul to talk about his experiences.

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**Paul:** *So I told him exactly what I went through and he says...I know this doctor in Portsmouth, or ...it was in RNH Haslar who does, em, a new course an it's called a Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Course. Would you be up for it? I said I'd be up for anything, you know, see what they could do. (66)*

Greg's third significant relationship (after two marriages) broke up, partly at least, because of his diagnosis of PTSD:

**Greg:** *When I was diagnosed with PTSD in 2005/6 em, I started to have more issues with it. And I think that the third main relationship that broke down was because she just could not deal with that level of emotion, em, guilt, anger. Everything, for three or four years, from 2006 to when we broke up was all Falklands associated. (126)*

Ron describes going to see a clinical psychologist and then a psychotherapist after his wife suggested he might be suffering from PTSD.

**Ron:** *I was dripping in sweat, trembling, almost on the verge of tears. So, I never saw the written reports that went back to the UK but as a result of that I get a small war pension for the formal diagnosis of PTSD. (80)*

Arthur reported nightmares and re-experiencing and talked at length about active service having put barriers between himself and his partners. However he didn't experience a breakdown and was never formally diagnosed with PTSD. He did talk about how he more recently had come to recognise he should perhaps

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have had counselling, seemingly acknowledging the psychological toll active service had upon him:

**Arthur:** *I don't think I'm barking okay, so I'm not seeing a psychiatrist or anything like that. Em, looking back on it, maybe I should have had some help a long time ago. Hindsight is a wonderful gift. But it was the old story, I'll always give help to somebody else, you know, don't need to help myself, especially going to the doctor's.*  
(212)

As we saw above, John experienced a breaking down but was not diagnosed with PTSD. This may have been because he doesn't remember very much of his experiences of active service and also because he felt supported by his wife on his return and in the years that followed.

**John:** *I think a lot of the guys...they don't want to talk about it cause they can remember... There's a big chunk of it where I've got no memory at all of...I've always been looking for bits and pieces to try to fill in the gaps of me memory....so I was always happy to talk about what I went down there and, eh, Sophie sort of stood by me and supported me and that...* (207)

Tom didn't experience any form of breakdown and was not diagnosed with PTSD and put this down to the training provided by the Marines.

**Tom:** *Yeah, I think it's, em, I think the training prepares you for that, which is surprising, em, to think of the 600 people I was with, I don't know of anyone who came back with a mental problem. I don't know of anyone. There may be, but you*

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*know, there is nobody I knew who had posttraumatic stress, or broke down or anything..... (102)*

Dennis described his story as 'different' from others and said he felt 'lucky' because he wasn't affected as much as everybody else (58). He didn't experience a breakdown on his return nor was he diagnosed with PTSD. He too speculated on the reasons for this during our interview:

**Dennis:** *I don't, I don't think I was actually in the intensity of it because I wasn't on watch, so I didn't see the missile come in, and I didn't hear the first bang, cause I was a bit dreamy. But I still, I was first aid party, and I still saw a lad die, but, em, I think, not being close to the lads that passed away..... I think sometimes life events, other events over take it. I lost my lad when he was 7, so....but that was 14 years ago, so that kind of overtook, sort of thing. (60)*

### 5.5 Meta-theme 3: Growth and Resilience

This meta-theme contains two themes – Sharing and Growth and Resilience – reflecting the fact that my participants' narratives didn't stop at the point of breakdown. Instead they all spoke of personal growth and improvements in their relationships with their wives and partners as a result of their sharing their experiences with therapists, psychiatrists and/or with their partners.

#### 5.5.1 Theme 9: Sharing

This theme is entitled 'sharing' reflecting the fact that for eight of the participants, sharing their experiences and emotions following active service

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helped them to cope and move forward and strengthened their relationships (only Tom's narrative did not contain this theme). For six participants this sharing only occurred after breaking down and/or after a diagnosis of PTSD and the treatment and support they received following this. However even those who did not experience breakdown and/or PTSD (Tom, Dennis and Arthur) reported finding it helpful to share their thoughts and emotions with their partners.

Greg's striking description of why a diagnosis of PTSD led to increased sharing is illustrative of the experiences of many of the participants:

**Greg:** *I liken it to a gay man confessing his, em, his homosexuality. It was like, you know what? I went through the Falklands. This is who I am. This is what it did. This is what it meant to me.* (116)

Ron talked about how important his wife's support was when he broke down and began to share his experiences with her.

**Ron:** *And I know that I wouldn't have got through it without her. And we talked about it. And she said I think you have some form of what is called PTSD. And I looked at her and I said 'but nothing happened to me, I wasn't injured' and she said 'it's not physical, it's in your head'.* (80)

The positive impact of sharing things with their partners is further illustrated by these reflections from James, Greg and Paul.



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**James:** *That opportunity to talk about the Falklands...be honest about me and being angry about things, and being drunk and all the rest of it has, em, has put me in a better place..... I'm still got to come over the hurdle of, em, sharing a lot of...more with her, because there's still that bit of 'I don't want to seem nuts and I don't want to seem needy'. So I'm trying to work out what balance is in terms of what you share....when you share it, how you share it and things like that. (248)*

**Greg:** *She understands and she knows that I get upset. She's seen the interview I did with Forces Television, em, and she's seen me get upset at Remembrance parades and stuff like that and she's seen me have flashbacks and nightmares, em, but she can cope with that now. And I think it's because I'm a little bit more honest about what happened and why it happened and I'm more honest and I don't mind getting upset in front of her because she knows it means a lot. (136)*

**Paul:** *I...I told her, I was honest with her, em, told her I was on that ship, I've had some problems, em, she said 'talk about it' and it was....like what I'd bottled up for so many years just all came flooding out and I was crying and, eh, she was in tears....this...this wasn't on the first night like, but....gradually as....as the relationship went on for a few weeks. (90)*

#### 5.5.2 Theme 10: Growth and Resilience

The final theme in many ways completes the psychological journey described by the participants in this research. Their narratives end with a focus on the future and in particular on the future of their relationships now that they have an increased understanding of the impact active service had upon them and why.

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Many participants found it helpful to share their stories and also reported finding new meanings in their experiences and new levels of understanding of their behaviors in relationships.

These quotes from George, Greg and Arthur illustrate this theme.

**George:** *It's getting stronger and stronger, because...I'm being more open with Antonia and cause she came down to Combat Stress and listened to the work they do down there...got guidance from them as well.... ....She's seen the effort I make to keep myself balanced....she's, she's completely...a lot happier with our relationship.*  
(116)

**Greg:** *I think this lady that I'm with now, completely understands. I think what she's got is she's got the...she's got...difficult to put it...em, not the real Greg, cause I think the real Greg was lost in 82. But I think she's got.....the true Greg....the Greg that's been forged by all those years of what he'd seen, what he'd done, how he'd adjusted to it, how he'd adapted to it, how he deals with it, em, the things that are important to him now.* (130)

**Arthur:** *That barrier was still there, with Carolina, but I'm much more aware of that barrier now. And I...for the large part of it, I'm quite comfortable opening, making openings into that barrier. I'm much more aware now that people are not trying to get in to make life...to be nosy, and I'm not trying to burden them, but sharing is important. I'm not saying I find it easy, cause I still don't really discuss a lot of those things with Carolina.* (180/182)

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Talking about his wedding to his third wife, Paul says:

**Paul:** *That day was perfect and it, it...I now, my surroundings, I've got my, my daughter's still there, the grandson's there, my wife's there and no one can come in unless I invite them and...and...you know...I can be meself. And it, the brilliant thing is, that for the last five, six years, the kids haven't called me Mr Volcano Head.*

(104)

Finally, perhaps Arthur sums up the cautious but hopeful stance most of the participants took when talking about their hopes for the future as far as their relationships are concerned:

**Arthur:** *One day at a time. I don't want to look at anything beyond that because....em....I don't want to be disappointed. And I don't want her to be disappointed. I think we continue to build on the relationship. I'd like to think that I'm more mature now and understanding of the psychological side of it, of the way I was behaving before and how it affects people and relationships.... So providing I can maintain that, and build on that experience...one day at a time... (204)*

### 5.6 Tom's Story

One participant, Tom, while challenged during the experience (and briefly afterward) by the anxiety provoked by a close encounter with death (and the accompanying sense of finitude and lack of control), was able to grow as an individual without it having negative consequences for his relationship – indeed Tom felt his experience had a positive impact on him as a person:

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**Tom:** *It might well have improved my character and understanding and resilience.*

(172)

As a result of these changes in him, Tom felt he was more able to encourage and support his wife in difficult times, something he had struggled with previously when they had a difficult experience.

**Tom:** *...and if I can be resilient I can probably help her to be resilient too.....Em, I think it helped me support Lucy in her career, she had a tough job. (170/172)*

Interestingly, both Tom and his wife seemed to have found a shared focus on the important things in life as a result of his experiences:

**Tom:** *It's made us both reflect on joy rather than going through, you know, routine...(170)*

Although Tom's account did include exposure to existential givens (Theme 1) and he described some anxiety on his return at the sound of fighter jets overhead, he did not report any significant impact of active service on his emotional wellbeing:

**Tom:** *I might be a very boring subject for you, cause I can't think of...you know...I didn't ....I didn't come back...I don't think it impacted strongly on me emotionally.*

(162)

## 5.7 Conclusion of the Findings

In conclusion, it seems that active service forced all of my participants to confront a number of existential givens, most notably the reality of their own mortality and their inability to control the moment of their death.

For most of the participants, these confrontations had a dramatic impact on them as individuals and changed their way of seeing the world, shifting their priorities and causing them to reassess their values. Most were overcome with challenging and difficult emotions – guilt, shame, anger, grief – which they struggled to manage and found impossible to communicate to their partners. Feeling increasingly alienated from their partners (and indeed from friends and family; from anyone who did not share their experiences), they withdrew into themselves or sought to isolate themselves emotionally and physically from others. Many found themselves in a dark place, unable to forget the sights and sounds of war, re-experiencing them in flashbacks or nightmares. Intimate relationships were blighted by lack of communication, emotional withdrawal, angry outbursts, abuse of alcohol, and verbal and physical abuse. For some of the participants, this pattern repeated itself across two, three or more relationships.

For six of the participants, a stressful life event/s many years after active service, led to them breaking down, being unable to function normally. Five participants were subsequently diagnosed with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. The process of breaking down and receiving support to process their experiences (either

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from partners or from mental health professionals) seems to have been a turning point for these participants. Increased understanding of the impact of active service upon them as individuals dissipated some of the shame and anger they felt, enabling them to share their experiences more freely with their partners and to seek and receive their support in moving forward. As a result, they gained increased understanding of their past behavior in relationships and became more optimistic about their ability to sustain a happy and fulfilling relationship going forward.

## 6. Critical Reflections and Limitations of the Research

### 6.1 My Relationship With The Research Question

As I outlined earlier in this report, my interest in the research topic was threefold: firstly as a psychologist and researcher, secondly as someone particularly interested in developing existential theory and practice in the area of relationships, and thirdly as the wife of an ex-serviceman who experienced active service. Since the submission of the research proposal in May 2010 and its approval in the August of that year, much has changed in my life and much has remained the same.

Firstly, I still identify as a psychologist and a researcher. However, as I outlined earlier in this report, in the four years between approval of my project and conducting the research I carried out over 3000 hours of therapy with a wide range of clients. This greatly improved my ability to work phenomenologically and demonstrated to me the strengths of the existential-phenomenological model. Importantly it also consolidated my identity as a *Counselling* Psychologist, providing me with a true understanding of the challenges of practicing in this field and motivation to add to its body of knowledge. My career had also taken a turn towards academia in the intervening years. I now manage psychology undergraduate and postgraduate programmes delivered to over 1600 distance-learning students. This has increased my awareness of the importance of academic research in informing clinical practice.

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My interest in developing existential theory and practice remains. And since submitting my research proposal I have had the pleasure of publishing two books on this topic. One of these, *Existential Perspectives on Relationship Therapy* (2013) (coedited with Professor Emmy van Deurzen), was the first substantial text looking at relationship therapy from an existential perspective and contained contributions from existential practitioners around the world. I therefore approached the conducting of this research with renewed interest in existential ways of understanding intimate relationships.

Finally, I am still married to an ex –serviceman. Just as the other factors that originally motivated my research question have changed and developed, however, so has my relationship with my husband. Most crucially, conducting this research led us both to a new and very personal place of understanding as to how active service has impacted upon our relationship. I address this in more detail below as part of my reflections on conducting the research.

### **6.2 Conducting the Research**

#### **6.2.1 Recruitment of Participants**

The invitation to take part in the research was posted on a wide range of internet sites and on the notice boards at the New School of Counselling and Psychotherapy but in the end my participants were recruited mainly from adverts on three Facebook pages: HMS Sheffield D80; Type 42 Association; Falklands 30. Tom was the only participant who came via an alternative route – an advert placed on my own Facebook page. All of the participants experienced



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active service during the Falklands War and five of the nine were on the same ship during the conflict. They all volunteered independently for the research and of course I did not disclose any details of other participants with my interviewees. They all worked in very different areas on a large ship with a crew of hundreds. However, they will have known each other during the conflict and some of them will have met since during reunions and memorial services. There is a risk therefore that their contributions to the research have been influenced in some way by their interactions with each other.

### 6.2.2 Participant Sample

My sample size of 10 participants was larger than that recommended for novice IPA researchers but is regarded as appropriate for professional doctorates (Smith et al, 2009, p52). I have detailed some of the challenges in analysing this amount of data in Chapter 4 of this report.

Being an idiopathic approach concerned with gaining an understanding of a particular phenomenon in a particular context, IPA requires a sample that is '*pretty homogeneous*' (Smith et al, 2009, p49). The literature offers little guidance as to what '*pretty homogeneous*' means other than stating that it largely depends on the nature of the research question. Smith et al (2009) do indicate, however, that if there is a large potential sample group (as there was with this study) then it makes sense to factor in socio-demographic factors. They also confirm that it is acceptable to be pragmatic and to further define the sample as participants come forward for the study. I am confident that my sample has

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sufficient homogeneity to provide a comprehensive and contextualized account of the phenomenon being researched together with enough heterogeneity to encourage cautious analysis and discourage me from treating participants as an 'identikit' (Smith et al, 2009, p49).

### 6.2.3 Research Interviews

Before conducting the research interviews I reflected once again on my assumptions and beliefs about ex-servicemen, PTSD and relationships. Given my personal involvement with the topic this was particularly important and helped me to more conscientiously apply Husserl's (1931) three elements of phenomenology. My aim was to describe my participants' '*intentional experience as uncontaminated by foreknowledge, bias and explanation*' (Cohn, 2007) while acknowledging the limits of my ability to do this due to my inevitable involvement with it; my being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1962). Despite this preparation and my determination to remain vigilant there were a number of occasions when I was surprised to find myself experiencing strong emotions in response to particular things that were said. On those occasions I was able to observe my reaction with interest and bracket it for later consideration. After each interview I used my research diary to record my reflections.

Here are some excerpts from the diary that illustrate the kind of issues I encountered and reflected upon:

**Excerpt 1:** *I found myself speculating at one point about PTSD prone individuals having earlier/previous traumas. Noted I was intellectualizing and tried to*

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*bracket this and focus back on what the participant was saying. Note to self – potential for further analysis of my data here in future.*

**Excerpt 2:** *At a number of points in the session he became choked with emotion and tearful. I noted again what I would have done if we were in a therapy session (gentle probing to allow emotion to emerge/be further explored) and bracketed this then helped bring him back into the room with a less emotive/more factual based question. I checked on his wellbeing at the end of the interview very carefully and asked if he was going to be okay to work and if he needed support.*

**Excerpt 3:** *At one point the participant described how his stepchildren used to call him 'Mr Volcano Head' because he'd explode, usually about tidiness, wanting it done now. This produced an instant and very strong reaction in me and I felt myself in touch with sorrow and was close to tears.*

**Excerpt 4:** *Felt myself disengaging at points from his testimony and wondering if it would be of value to my research but found it easy to bring myself back into the room with him having reflected on my need to prove a hypothesis!*

**Excerpt 5:** *Less focus on content of his active service – was I creating that in some way today after yesterday's quite painful realisations? Examined this thought during all three sessions today. Was I asking fewer questions? Had I set up the sessions differently at the start (same 'script' but did I emphasise things differently?).*

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After a number of the interviews I discussed my reactions with my academic supervisor, particularly in relation to their possible impact on the analysis of the interviews. I also used personal therapy and clinical supervision sessions where appropriate.

I don't feel that the fact that I interviewed two of the participants by SKYPE had a significant impact on the content of those discussions. Once again, however, I used my research diary to record my reactions as this excerpt shows:

**Excerpt 6:** *I found the SKYPE interview interesting. We had a good connection throughout but there were moments where I was aware of slight lagging and this meant at times we talked over each other. I was also aware of the lack of body language information we both had, compared to face-to-face interviews. I could see him from the waist up and he could see me from the shoulders up. Note to change this next time so the participant can see more of me.*

On reflection, I was surprised to find that the SKYPE interviews did not feel hugely different from the face-to-face interviews. They were both of similar length to the face-to-face sessions and I felt a rapport was built equally quickly with the participants involved as it had been with those interviewed in person. There were a couple of occasions when I had to ask each participant to repeat what they were saying, because the internet connection reduced in quality and therefore affected the volume or ease of understanding of what the individual was saying. However this seemed to have little impact on the flow of the conversation. One of the participants interviewed on SKYPE (Tom) told a quite

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different story to that of the other participants, while the narrative from the other (Ron) contained many of the same themes as the participants interviewed in person. I concluded therefore that it was unlikely that Tom's story was significantly altered by medium through which the interview was conducted.

#### 6.2.4 Data Analysis

I found it very challenging to make the interpretative leap required in IPA – to develop a '*dialogue between the researcher, the coded data and their psychological knowledge about what it might mean for participants to have these concerns*' (Larkin, et al, 2006; Smith, 2004). Through discussions with my supervisor and in my own therapy, realized that I felt a tremendous pressure to be true to the meaning intended by the participant. I was reluctant to bring myself in to the data as I felt I risked doing an injustice to the story being told. This risk is acknowledged by Willig & Stainton-Rogers (2008) who point out that interpretation can enrich the research by generating new insights and understanding, but also risks the imposition of meaning and giving or denying a voice to our research participants. I may have therefore been through the hermeneutic circle a few more times than a seasoned IPA researcher, however, as I outlined in Chapter 4 above, I carried out the data analysis in a rigorous manner, paying close attention to the philosophical foundations of IPA (Husserl, 1931; Heidegger, 1962; Sartre, 1943; Merleau-Ponty, 1962) and to the common processes outlined by its creators (Smith et al, 2009; Smith, 1997). In the end my experience was that the meaning of the participants narratives slowly evolved, or emerged from the data. There were no eureka moments or epiphanies. I feel

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therefore that it is likely that I remained true to the voice of the participants, achieving my goal of bringing their meaning into focus. I think this is because, as an Existential-Phenomenological practitioner, I was ultimately able to immerse myself in the world of each of the participants and yet bring to bear an ability to stand back and regard the foreground/background.

While IPA has been criticised (most notably by Giorgi, 1994) I found it to be an appropriate methodology for the purpose of this research.

### **6.2.5 My Impact on the Research and Its Impact on Me**

Despite my attempts to limit the impact of my personal experiences on the research, at every stage, from design through to analysis, a review of the experience of designing and conducting it leaves me more convinced than ever that there are limits to '*eidetic intuition*' (Husserl, 1927) and that my choice of an interpretative phenomenological approach was epistemologically sound. The research had a fundamental impact on me and on my relationship with my partner. As a result of my increased awareness of the issues facing ex-servicemen following active service and as a direct result of listening to my participants' narratives, I now bring a new sense of meaning to some of my husband's behaviours and to some of the relationship challenges we have faced over the last 25 years. This has, in turn, enabled my husband, 33 years after the conflict in the Falklands, to acknowledge to me for the first time, and to some extent to himself, the impact active service has had on his life and on our relationship. He has since sought psychological support in the hope that this will

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bring additional understanding and enable him to emerge from the shadows of his experiences.

It is unlikely therefore that my personal involvement at this fundamental level can be bracketed completely. I hope that the use of IPA (Smith et al, 2008) has resulted in me being able to acknowledge my personal involvement and bring it to the interpretative element of the research in a way that brings forth the experiences of the participants as its originators intended.

## 7. Discussion

### 7.1 Introduction

The findings from the current study suggest that the impact of active service on ex-servicemen is profound. The sudden, unexpected confrontation with ontological (universal) realities about human existence – and in particular, being compelled to stare at the inevitability of death as something that applied to them – seemed to call into question all the assumptions they made previously about the world. This created overwhelming feelings of anxiety and despair, plunging most of them into an existential crisis.

All nine participants seemed to be thrown into a state of ‘being-towards-death’ (Heidegger, 1962), an experience that changed their way of being in the world and clarified or transformed their ideas as to what their priorities should be going forward. There is evidence in all the narratives of the participants’ struggles to make sense of their experiences. For one participant, Tom, this ‘*will towards meaning*’ (Frankl, 1984, p81) resulted in a reaffirmation of, and increased focus upon, already held values and beliefs about the world. The rest of the participants experienced a more fundamental shift in their worldviews away from adventure and freedom and towards security and intimate relationship.

In 1982, despite the growing research base on the experience of Vietnam veterans (Moore & Penk, 2011), little was known outside medical circles of the impact of trauma on the human psyche and the concept of Posttraumatic Stress



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Disorder had been formalised within the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (2008) of the American Psychiatric Association just two years earlier. The participants in this study were suddenly and unexpectedly thrown into a war and a few short weeks later thrown just as suddenly back into 'normal' life. There were no stress briefings, Trauma Risk Management sessions or decompression programmes such as are offered today to personnel returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Hunt et al, 2014). Their partners had no understanding of what they had experienced and were able to offer little support (confirming Burnell et al's (2007) finding that family support for Falklands War veterans was limited). Neither the participants nor their partners had any understanding of the effects of psychological trauma and both they and their partners dealt with traumatic memories through avoidance (again providing support for Burnell et al's (2007) conclusions). This may also lend support to Balderrama-Durbin et al's (2013) findings that a lack of willingness to disclose combat related experiences significantly predicted concurrent symptoms of PTSD. This lack of communication thwarted the attempts made by the participants to understand and achieve growth from their experiences (Tsai et al, 2014).

Seven of the nine participants struggled with overwhelming emotions and feelings of alienation, isolation and despair for many years (this finding supports the existential '*descriptive criteria*' of posttraumatic stress proposed by Harmand et al (1993, p283)). Six of them eventually broke down, exhausted by their attempts to cope and unable to carry on with normal life any longer, supporting

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suggestions that the Falklands War was disproportionately traumatic (Quiroga & Sear, 2009; Orner et al, 1994; O'Brian and Hughes, 1991). Five of the participants were diagnosed with PTSD six to thirty years after their experiences of active service in the Falkland Islands, supporting, in some cases, the idea of delayed-onset PTSD (DSM-5, 2013; Kulka et al, 1990) and in others supporting the assertion that delayed-onset PTSD is actually a misnomer as it describes late diagnosis rather than late onset (Horesh et al, 2015). For the participants in this study, in the intervening years, and indeed in the time since diagnosis, the impact of their experiences upon their intimate relationships was a devastating one.

Table 11 summarises the relationship history of the participants. The data it contains seems to support previous findings that military personnel get married younger (Lundquist, 2008; Hogan & Seifert, 2010). All but two of the participants (Tom and John) had been divorced at least once, with five of them marrying and divorcing two times or more. Although most studies of divorce rates in military personnel indicate they are similar to those of the general population (McCone & O'Donnell, 2006; Karney & Crown, 2007), my findings offer support for research (Lundquist, 2008; Hogan & Seifert, 2010; Adler-Baeder et al 2006) that suggests military personnel who marry young or who are below the rank of NCO are more likely to divorce than comparable civilians and that research that includes second and subsequent marriages provides a more accurate picture of military marriage dissolution. This indicates that something about the military life experienced by my participants, and/or something about

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them and/or their partners, may not have been conducive to successful negotiation of long-term relationships.

*Table 11: Participants' Relationship History*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age joined Navy</b>	<b>Age &amp; rank* during active service</b>	<b>Age at first marriage</b>	<b>Relationship History</b>
<b>James</b>	16	19/Rating	20	Casual girlfriend during active service Married six months after his return from active service Divorced after 11 years In long term relationship at time of interview
<b>George</b>	16	23/Rating	23	Casual girlfriend during active service Married two years after his return Divorced after eight years Remarried (date unclear) Divorced (date unclear) Remarried two years ago Remains married
<b>Tom</b>	24	28/ Officer	18	Married aged 18 Was married with two children during active service Remains married (39 years)
<b>Greg</b>	16	19/Rating	19	Newly married during active service Divorced after seven years Remarried age 28 (approx.) Divorced after seven years In a long term relationship at time of interview
<b>Paul</b>	16	23/NCO	20	Married with one child during active service (second child arrived on his way home from Falklands) Remarried age 29 (approx.)

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				Divorced after seven years Remarried age 43 Remains married after 13 years
<b>Dennis</b>	16	19/Rating	20	Single during active service Married age 20 Divorced age 22 Married age 24 Divorced age 40 In long term relationship at time of interview
<b>Arthur</b>	19	22/Rating	22	Engaged during active service Married age 22 Divorced age Remarried age Divorced after 10 years Single for 10 years In a new relationship at time of interview
<b>Ron</b>	18	39/NCO	21	Married age 21 Married with one child during active service Divorced after 26 years Remarried age 58 Remains married to second wife
<b>John</b>	17	19/Rating	20	Single during active service Married eight months after his return from active service Remains married (33 years)

\* *Officer* refers to all ranks including and above Midshipman (Royal Navy) and Second Lieutenant Royal Marines. *NCO* (Non Commissioned Officer) includes all ranks from (and including) Petty Officer to Warrant Officer (Royal Navy) and from (and including) Sergeant to Warrant Officer (Royal Marines). *Rating* includes all ranks from Able Rate to (and including) Leading Rate (Royal Navy) and from Marine to (and including) Corporal (Royal Marines).

Recognising that military life places unique demands on intimate relationships, a great deal of research has taken place into the impact of deployment related separations on the relationships of military personnel (see for example, Karney & Crown, 2007). There is definitely support in my study for the concept that

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homecomings are dilemmas military couples need to negotiate (Keeling, 2014).

For example, Arthur described the challenge of fitting into established family routines and renegotiating his role on returning home after deployment:

**Arthur:** *...being at home all the time...I'd get under her feet, she'd get under my feet and we'd irritate each other. I mean, you know, we'd go home and the kids would say, 'can you do?' and she'd go 'don't interfere'. They've got this perfect set up, it all works, don't interfere... (109)*

There was no support in my findings, however, for the proposal that deployment or separation per se had a negative impact overall on my participants' relationships (Hoge et al, 2006). My participants talked about the separations as the inevitable consequence of the job they chose, indicating that both they and their partners accepted and managed these times apart with relative ease the majority of the time. Indeed many of them talked about the positive elements of coming home after a long time at sea (the freshness of the relationship, being able to spend quality time together while on leave, renewed physical intimacy) and attributed the longevity of one or more of their relationships to the fact that they were away so much of the time. George described coming home on leave after a second, return trip to the Falkland Islands after the war had ended:

**George:** *You know, you come back...you've been away...like I'd been away for six months down the Falkland Islands. I had, eh, four weeks leave before I had to join my next, eh, posting and you made the most of that four weeks together. So you went out for meals, you did...you went to the cinema...took her shopping and things*

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*like that and you've...you made the most of that time together. It wasn't a lot of...there wasn't...normal day-to-day pressures. (64)*

My findings do, however, strongly support the proposals that combat increases the hazard rate for military marriages (Ruger et al, 2002; Hoge et al, 2006) and that combat exposure is related to relationship difficulties (Keeling, 2014). They also provide support for the idea that it is PTSD, or the symptoms of trauma (Karney & Crown, 2007; Geoff et al, 2007; Erbes et al 2012; Wick & Nelson, 2014) or antisocial behaviour such as alcohol abuse and violence (Gimbel & Booth, 1994) that impact upon the relationships of military personnel rather than the experience of combat itself.

The rest of this chapter places the data in Table 11 and the initial broad reflections contained in this introduction into context by discussing the key findings of this research from an existential-phenomenological counselling psychology perspective.

### **7.2 The Psychological Journey Described In This Research**

The metaphor of life as a journey is one that lends itself naturally to stories of transition, change, challenge and growth. We can have short or long, profound or forgettable, easy or challenging journeys, and our experiences, indeed our lives, share these characteristics. Journeys sometimes go as planned, but often do not. They sometimes take us to new and unfamiliar places, but always move us inexorably forwards and away from a place we once inhabited. We can take the direct route from A to B or go the long way around.

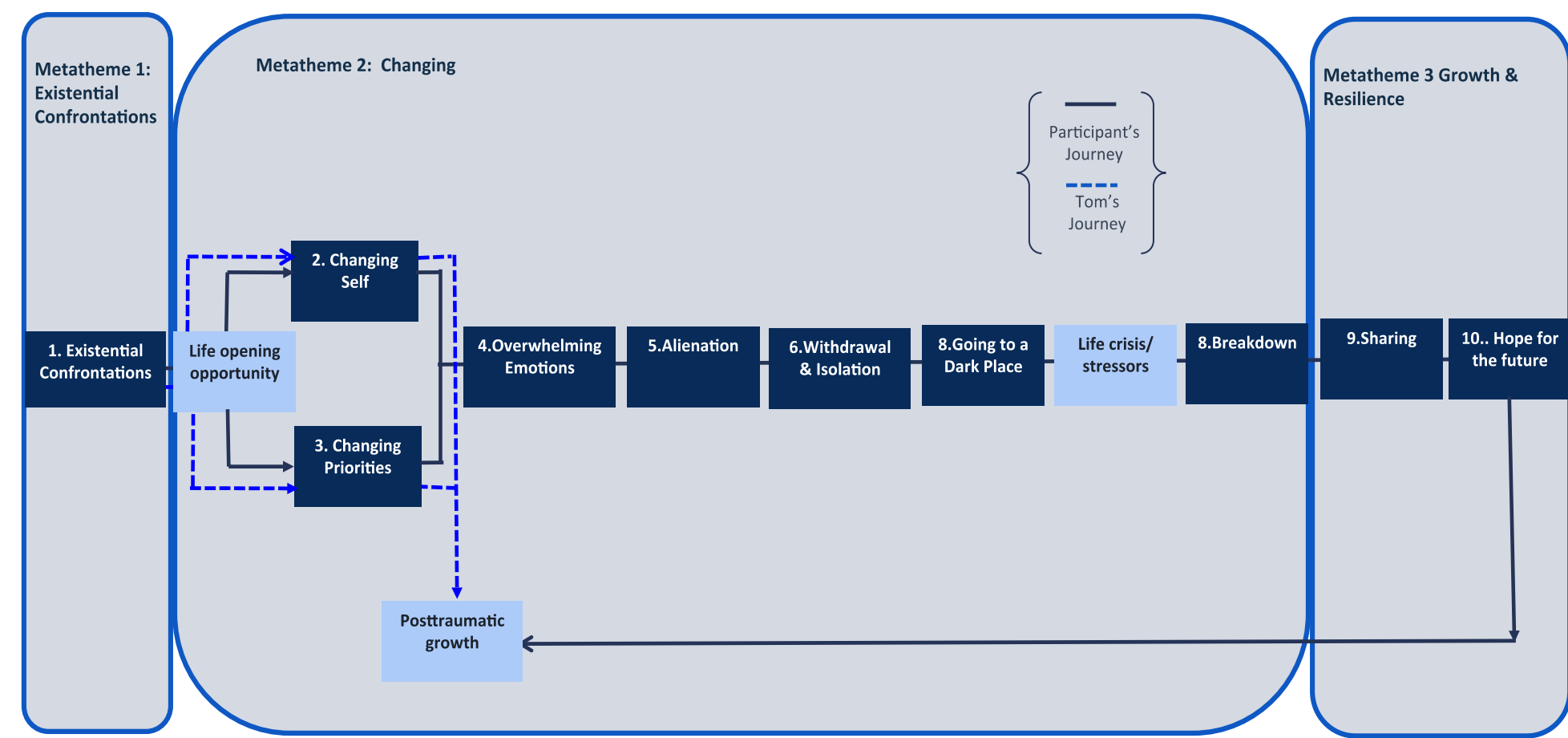
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In joining the Navy, my participants embarked on a literal and a psychological journey. Most sought travel and adventure, many sought also to escape childhood traumas or difficult family environments, all ended up fighting a war against an Argentinian invasion force in the South Atlantic Ocean, more than 8,000 miles away from home.

It is perhaps therefore unsurprising that to a man they described their experiences, and the impact of those experiences on their intimate relationships, in terms of their personal psychological journey. Figure 1 illustrates this psychological journey as described to me by the nine ex-servicemen whose stories are included in this study. Not all the participants stopped at all of the destinations on this journey (e.g. not all the themes were evident in all of the participants' narratives – see Table 9). In addition, the length of time spent by each of them at particular spots also varied. As we have seen, for many, the journey was frozen in time at particular spots for many years, indeed decades.

A modern aphorism states that it is the journey that matters, not the destination. This is true of life and is also true of the findings of this research. So while this section outlines the scenery at the individual destinations along my participants' journey, this is less important than the story told by the journey as a whole. This story is summarised in Figure 1. It is the story of the psychological journey these men made during and after the Falklands War, and in particular the story of their intimate relationships with wives and girlfriends, and how their stop off in the Falklands impacted upon the course of these relationships.

**Figure 1:** Participants' Psychological Journey





Before looking at this journey in more detail, a short summary is outlined below in order to enable the reader to quickly assimilate its key elements.

- Combat forced my participants to confront the existential givens of death, freedom and limitations, meaninglessness and absurdity **(Theme 1)**.
- These confrontations led them to question their existing view of the world and their place within it, leading to a life opening opportunity (Jacobsen, 2006) e.g. an opportunity for growth and change.
- Their openness to their existential situation changed them and the way they related to others. Some of these changes were positive but for most participants, negative changes were more in evidence **(Theme 2)**.
- Their priorities, particularly in terms of their relationships, were also changed by their experiences **(Theme 3)**.
- For one participant, Tom, this confrontation with existential givens and the changes that confrontation provoked, led quickly to posttraumatic growth and strengthened his relationship with his wife.
- For the remaining participants, the existential crisis provoked by their experiences of combat and the resulting need to re-evaluate everything they thought, valued and believed about the world and themselves, combined with their return from active service, provoked difficult emotions such as guilt, shame and anger. For all of the participants except Dennis, these emotions felt overwhelming and out of control **(Theme 4)**.
- Feeling that no one would be able to understand their experiences and feeling different from those around them, they experienced a sense of

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estrangement and alienation from friends, family and partners (all participants except Tom and John) **(Theme 5)**.

- Feeling increasingly alienated and unable to manage or share the emotions provoked by their experiences, they all (except Dennis and Tom) withdrew into themselves and retreated from their wives or girlfriends and the wider social world **(Theme 6)**.
- After many years trying to hide the impact that active service had upon them, struggling to carry on as normal, all except Tom and Dennis found themselves in a dark place, characterised by flashbacks and/or alcohol abuse, desperation and despair and for some, verbal and physical abuse of their partners, **(Theme 7)**.
- Eventually, for most of the participants (all except Tom, Dennis and Arthur), another trauma or series of stressful life events took them beyond the limits of their resilience and into crisis.
- Breaking down was characterised by an inability to carry on as normal in their relationships or at work and for five of the participants (James, George, Greg, Paul and Ron) led to a formal diagnosis of PTSD **(Theme 8)**.
- For all of the participants except Tom and Dennis, breakdown and/or a diagnosis of PTSD led to increased understanding of their behaviour and higher levels of sharing of emotions and experiences with partners and stronger relationships as a result **(Theme 9)**.
- Understanding and sharing their emotions and experiences led to personal and relationship growth and increased resilience **(Theme 10)**.

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- Ultimately, the journey that started with active service, ended for all of the participants in posttraumatic growth. For Tom, the journey was more direct than it was for the other participants, who visited a range of challenging and difficult places on the way.

I will now discuss the findings in detail, following the themes highlighted in the order in which they appeared in the psychological journey of the participants.

Please note that I concentrate first of all on the story emerging from the narratives of all the participants except Tom. Tom's psychological journey was different from the others' and is described separately below

### 7.3 Active Service Confronts Combatants with Existential Realities (Theme 1)

*....that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins... (Yalom, 1980, p465)*

The findings from the current study suggest that during active service, combatants are forced to come face to face with existential realities. All of the participants described a confrontation with one or more of these '*ultimate concerns*' (Yalom, 1980). Even 33 years after the events, the shock and disbelief provoked by being '*propelled into a confrontation with one's existential 'situation' in the world*' (Yalom, 1980, p67) was conveyed by the tone and body language of the participants along with their words. Here, for example, Greg struggles to

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describe being the terror and shock of his confrontation with the reality of death and mortality:

**Greg:** *It....yeah....it...it...it...they're there and then they're not there. And what's really upsetting about the way that people...obviously I know people die and people pass away...with modern warfare, it's so quick (mm) it...it...it's just bang...gone...*

(30)

These findings offer a real sense of what it meant to my participants to experience a traumatic event.

The traditional medical model does not capture the human experience of trauma illustrated so vividly in the findings of this present study. The diagnostic criteria for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (DSM-5, 2013, p178) list the circumstances necessary to create trauma including direct experience or witnessing of a traumatic event, etc.. What my research suggests is that in order for these circumstances to actually be traumatic, they must provoke in the individual a confrontation with existential givens. In other words they must strip them of the comfort of the ontic, day to day concerns that enable us all to go about our normal lives and leave them '*staring into the abyss*' (Nietzsche, 2014).

The existential paradigm and its approach to trauma provides support for and insights into the findings of my study in relation to the confrontation with existential givens. The Existential Confrontations theme provides support for the proposition that traumatic experiences disrupt or fracture our worldview (Spinelli, 2005), making us question all that we previously took for granted and

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confronting us with totally unfamiliar ways of being in the world (Oakley, 2009; Heidegger, 1962; Greening, 1971). This theme also offers support for Heidegger's (1962) concept of being-towards-death. Combat seems to have thrust my participants into the state of being-towards-death, with its concomitant realisations that they were alone in the world, unable to hide or run away from death (as Tom (118) said '*...you can't do anything. You cannot minimise or change your risk. It's there, isn't it...*'), unable to predict when or if it would claim them and, once they had encountered it, utterly exposed to its primacy over any other concerns they might have.

The importance of this finding is that it offers clues as to why the experience of combat is so profound and life changing, indeed into why it might be experienced as 'traumatic'. It is this very destabilising of the natural state and sudden exposure to the authentic state that is so shocking and traumatic. Combat doesn't cause trauma symptoms, combat causes individuals to question all that they think they know about the world, everything that they value, all their actions and priorities to date and for the future and, in doing so, creates an existential crisis in which they have to cope with a sudden vacuum of meaning (Frankl, 1986).

My research offers support for previous research that highlights the link between combat and symptoms of trauma or PTSD (Hoge et al, 2007a; Hoge et al, 2007b; Ramchand et al, 2010) in that it confirms that combat is experienced as something that is inherently traumatic. However it goes one step further than this and offers an insight into why it is traumatic – because of the existential

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crisis it provokes. The unexpected confrontation with death, coupled with a realisation that they could do little or nothing to determine their fate, and the surreal and meaningless nature of much of what was going around them took these men to a place they didn't know existed, where their worldviews and the meanings and values from which they were constructed appeared to no longer apply, echoing Oakley's (2009) and Greening's (1971) suggestions that trauma places us in a wholly unfamiliar place in the world and shatters our relationship with existence.

In the traditional model of stress, these experiences and particularly the feelings they evoke in participants would be described in terms of symptoms that need to be reduced or eliminated. The existential model, however, sees such moments of existential crisis as 'life opening' opportunities (Jacobsen, 2006), a chance for the individual to reflect upon their way of being in the world, to step outside a collective, borrowed set of values and adopt a more authentic way of life. In this sense my research adds to the current medical model of PTSD and offers us insight into how clinical practice might be adapted to help individuals understand what has occurred at a spiritual, personal, social and physical level (Deurzen, 2007) and to offer the opportunities to begin to make sense of their world in new ways.

## **7.4 Active Service Changes People and Their Relationships (Themes 2 & 3)**

Two of the themes emerging from my research (Theme 2: *Changing Self* and Theme 3: *Changing Priorities*) support the idea that people are changed by combat through their experience of the reality of death (Harmand et al, 1993) and the life opening opportunity (Jacobsen, 2006) it presents. Every one of the participants in this study reported being changed in some way by their experience of active service. Indeed, as mentioned earlier in this report, the very way they told their stories – using the changes in themselves to explain and put into context their relationship histories - emphasised the importance and centrality of this change in their way of being in the world. Something fundamental happened to them – they lost their independence (Dennis), they became more focused on what was important in life (Tom), they couldn't settle back into normal life (Ron), they were unable to form close bonds with others (George) - they were changed in a way that altered the course of their lives forever.

One of the things that is interesting about these findings is that participants didn't always recognise these changes in themselves at the time. They either recognised them many years later as a result of therapeutic work or more general processing of their experiences, or their partners pointed out the changes to them (There are echoes of Kierkegaard's (2005) assertion that life makes sense backwards but has to be lived forwards). A therapeutic model based on the medical paradigm might describe this as lack of insight and a

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psychodynamic model might use terms such as 'denial' and 'repression' to explain the psychological mechanisms at work (Freud, 2005). The existential counselling model, however, rejects the idea of a distinct unconscious (Deurzen & Kenward, 2005) and it's assertion that parts of the mind are hidden from examination, in favour of the phenomenological view that the psyche is entirely open to examination. Sartre (1948) proposes that consciousness is our intentionality towards the world and suggests that we have the ability to choose to be reflective or non-reflective on aspects of this consciousness (Heidegger's (1927, p61) concept of '*disclosure*' also describes our ability to hide from things in this way). In choosing to be non-reflective, many of the participants arguably demonstrated '*bad faith*' (Sartre, 1948, p61) or self-deception, in an attempt to avoid the anxiety that recognition of the changes in them would provoke. This is in no way a criticism of the participants. Heidegger (1927) describes this stance as the natural state - one in which we dwell in the ontic, everyday world - reflecting the fact that it is impossible for us to be in a state of perpetual existential awareness (Frankl, 1986) without going quite mad. The existential view offers individuals insight into the verb like nature of existence (Cooper, 2003) - the inevitability of constant change in response to experiences in the world - and their freedom to choose the nature of these changes.

For many of the participants, there was loss of the potential to be someone different, someone better, and a sense that their essence had been somehow damaged or even destroyed.

Greg describes this poignantly:



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**Greg:** *The real Greg was lost in 82. I was young, adventurous, carefree, em, happy go lucky. Hadn't a care in the world, had I? But at 19 years old life changed...like it did for 1000s of guys like me. And of course nobody could go through an experience like that and come through it unscathed. So sometimes I get...I grieve for the person than might have been, you know. (130)*

Therapeutic exploration of the changes in them might have allowed them to explore sense of loss of something core to themselves and recognition of what was gained, reducing the feelings of grief and loss that were palpable in all of the participants' narratives apart from Tom's.

Active service not only changed the participants themselves, it also changed their priorities and goals in life, particularly as far as intimate relationships were concerned; a shift from freedom and adventure to relationship and children. Those who weren't in a relationship sought one out, many of them getting married quickly afterwards (see Table 11). Children then followed quickly for three of the participants. Those who were already married sought confirmation that they were cared for (in Greg's case), or looked forward to re-connecting with their wife (Ron) or to strengthening their relationship through prioritizing the important things in life (Tom). Arthur, who was engaged to be married before leaving on active service, went ahead and married his finance on his return. Nervous of getting close to anyone for fear of hurting them and being hurt himself, however, he appears to have taken the role of married man while not making the psychological shift required to fully transition from lad's life to married life (highlighted in Keeling's (2014) research as a key relationship

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dilemma facing military personnel).

We can understand this change in priorities in existential terms in a number of ways. Firstly in terms of the existential dilemma of freedom versus connectedness (Deurzen, 2007) we can understand the participants as having shifted on this spectrum from a point where freedom was more valued, to a point where connectedness became the more important goal. This shift arguably took place as a result of their confrontation with life's finitude:

*It is the awareness of death that promotes a shift in perspective and makes it possible for an individual to distinguish between core and accessory: to reinvest one and divest the other. (Yalom 1980, p165)*

Such a confrontation also has the potential to rob people of a will to live (Deurzen, 2007). Greg, for example, described feeling life, and his in particular was less precious and most of the participants described increased fighting and abuse of alcohol, inferring their lives were less valued than they had been previously. This supports research showing that veterans with PTSD may engage in more risk taking behaviours (Fear et al, 2008; Thomsen et al, 2011; Thandi et al, 2015). Similarly, the confrontation with existential realities seems to have robbed my participants of their sense that a life of travel and adventure in the Royal Navy would be meaningful and fulfilling. This supports Harmand et al's (1993) view that loss of meaning is central to the experience of trauma and Frankl's (1982) theory that a sudden meaning vacuum created by an existential crisis will create an urgent desire on the part of the individual for the identification of new meaning.

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Frankl (1982) asserts that trauma challenges us to find a reason to live us to find meaning in absurdity or suffering and Sartre (1938) and Camus (1942) suggest that we can only learn to live when life has become meaningless. The findings of my research show that my participants responded to the opportunities offered by their experiences of trauma and the resultant meaninglessness of their previous priorities and values by focusing on a new meaning around relationships and children.

**James:** *Em, it probably accelerated it quicker in terms of, having been close to death, wanting to get married, wanting a family and everything else. Eh, probably accelerated, eh, my thinking towards 'that's the next big thing I need to do' if you like, if there's a box in life I need to tick, I need to do this, and now, as soon as I can.* (158)

As highlighted above, Keeling (2014) identifies *Transition from lad's life to married life* as one of five dilemmas that military relationships have to negotiate. For James, George, Dennis and John in particular, combat experience seems to have accelerated the pace at which they confronted and negotiated this dilemma. Dennis reflects on the link between his experiences and his rush to get married:

**Dennis:** *I got married probably too young at 22. But after, like being in that situation, when you get to 22 and you've been in from 16, you think you know everything (laughs). Well I did, I thought, time to settle down now. I've done 6 and a half years. I've been through this, been through that, and....* (70)

My findings therefore offer insight into why it may be that military personnel get

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married younger than the general population (adding to previous research that focused upon, for example, the financial benefits and support with housing offered to married military couples (Lundquist, 2008; Hogan & Seifert, 2010)). All of my participants reported an increased sense of urgency to tick life's boxes as a result of their experience of active service. This also provides support for what Paidoussis-Mitchell (2012, p37), describes as an existential principle around the confrontation of existential givens and its tendency to create in people *'the urgency for living well, authentically and meaningfully'* (Yalom, 1980; Frankl, 1984, Barnett, 2009).

What also emerged in the theme of changing priorities was that participants' experiences of active service changed their ability to deal with what Cannon and Lindberg (2014, p68) describe as *'the couple's dilemma'*. This dilemma is based on Sartre's (1948, p61) idea of bad faith and the constant challenge we face to maintain both freedom and security in our intimate relationships. For my participants, this dilemma was evident in a seemingly paradoxical need to be in a relationship and at the same time not have their own freedom curtailed. James describes how this paradoxical desire made it difficult for him to achieve his goal of saving his marriage:

James: ....*there wasn't that ability to bring everything back together in a, I suppose what you'd call a compromised way, because, in that seven years there had never been really any compromise. You know, if I'm going to do something I'm going to do it, this is going to be the way it is...* (208)

Interestingly Dennis responded to the couple's dilemma in a different way, giving

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up all his freedom in the hope of achieving security in the relationship. This stance of total compromise was ultimately no less destructive than the stance of no compromise taken by some of the other participants.

**Dennis:** *I just closed me eyes and that....just listened to what she says and get a bit, kind of, everything's like...sometimes get in a relationship where everything's their way and I just sit there and do what they say so...I don't do conflict very well. At all. Especially from women. (92)*

We could, like Keeling (2014) seek to understand what was occurring psychologically for these men in terms of Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969; Keeling, 2014). Within this theoretical framework, the men's actions would be evidence of an evolutionary driven system designed to keep us close to someone who can care for and protect us in times of threat. The men's drive towards relationships would be described as motivated by the desire for a secure base, achieved through proximity seeking behaviours (Bowlby, 1969). Being adults, the target of these attachment desires would naturally have shifted from their parents or primary caregiver to a romantic partner. Their inability to maintain their relationship could then be described as the result of their ambiguous or chaotic patterns of attachment (Ainsworth, 1969).

Alternatively, these findings could be interpreted according to an Existential Counselling paradigm. As my participants eloquently described, through combat they came face to face with the ultimate existential concern – that of death – and therefore with the primordial fear that they would cease to exist. While in normal circumstances we would '*selectively inattend to reminders of our*

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*existential situation*' (Yalom, 1980, p165), these men were thrust into situations where this was not possible. This resulted in a massive shift in their perspectives and shattered the illusion that they '*all the time in the world*' to live a full and passionate life. This drove them to seek to '*tick the next box*' as James (158) described it as quickly as they possibly could. Inevitably, their '*being-towards-death*' (Heidegger, 1962, p348) also resulted in extraordinarily high levels of anxiety which, naturally, they sought to alleviate through a range of strategies including ostensibly clumsy (Deurzen, 2007) or harmful strategies like seeking to be in control, drinking, fighting (see the discussion of Theme 7: Despair) and more positive strategies such as, in Tom's case, for example, focusing on the priorities in life and spending less energy on trivialities. Seeking a serious relationship could therefore be seen as a response to their existential confrontations. Determining whether, for each participant, it was an authentic choice – a choice made freely and in line with their values and way of being in the world - or an inauthentic one, designed to alleviate crippling anxiety, could be explored in a therapeutic setting and cannot be determined by this research. What this research does seem to show, however, is that it was a choice that conflicted with a paradoxical desire for freedom, also provoked by the existential confrontations they experience.

## **7.5 Overwhelming emotions change people and their relationships**

### **(Theme 4)**

As discussed, all of the participants in this study described the way active service confronted them with the existential givens of existence. This created a life opening opportunity (Jacobsen, 2006) calling into question their understanding of the world and their place within it. Each of them emerged from the experience changed – for all but Tom, these changes were perceived as negative ones, as losses to their core identity or a constriction of their potentialities in the world. Their experiences also resulted a change in priorities (though perhaps for Tom it was more of a refocusing of his priorities). They were challenged to cope with these changes while transitioning out of active service and back into regular service/‘normal life’. Most of the participants (all except Tom) quickly found themselves overwhelmed by emotions, which they felt ill-equipped to manage or understand.

My findings suggest that these overwhelming emotions that are the result of participants’ confrontation with existential realities and that are frequently described as symptoms of a ‘disorder’ might actually be better described as normal, natural reactions to a life event that essentially causes a paradigm shift in the individual’s psyche. As Frankl (1984, p32) states:

*An abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal behaviour.*

In the traditional medical model of stress, these experiences and particularly the physical, emotional and reaction of participants to them, would be described in

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terms of symptoms that need to be reduced or eliminated. In existential terms they would be seen as a call to action, offering the individual with an opportunity to confront, describe and make sense of the losses that they have endured as a result of their experiences (du Plock, 2010).

The exposure to existential realities and the call to action this precipitated seems to have created high levels of existential anxiety in the participants, though interestingly, few of them describe feeling anxious (only George talks about anxiety and panic attacks) suggesting that this anxiety was either un-nameable or so unbearable as to require conversion into other more palatable or manageable emotions (Iacovou, 2011). The lack of anxiety as a central, overt feature of my participants' experiences is interesting in light of the fact that the DSM-5 (APA, 2013) now places PTSD in a new category of 'trauma and stressor related disorders', moving it out of 'anxiety disorders' where it sat within the DSM-4. This research seems to indicate that existential rather than neurotic anxiety remains key to the experience of trauma, regardless of how it is categorised within the medical model.

Most of the participants in this research attempted to suppress, deny or ignore the difficult and overwhelming emotions it evoked and to avoid the challenges it placed upon them to relate to themselves, the world and their partners in different ways. This suppression started as soon as they arrived home, with participants often choosing not to discuss their experiences even with shipmates who had shared them. These findings support Burnell et al's (2007) finding that Falklands War veterans did not discuss their experiences. They also support



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suggestions (Balderamma-Durbin et al, 2013; Jones et al, 2009) that the military culture discourages emotional disclosure.

There are other factors that affected my participants' willingness and ability to listen and acknowledge their emotions to themselves or to their partners, however. James described his '*hunter-gatherer mentality*' (216) and Arthur talked about the need to protect his partner from what he had experienced in combat (148). These men were all born and grew up in between the 1950s and early 1970s, an era when the stereotype of the strong, male predominated, emotional disclosure, psychological therapy, etc. were far from common and PTSD a very new concept.

Another factor that may have made it more difficult for many of my participants to understand and disclose their emotions is that many of them described difficult and emotionally impoverished childhoods or early adulthoods. Two participants lost close family members to suicide, one lost a child to cancer, and three participants were abused physically and/or mentally during childhood and adolescence. Many learnt at an early age that emotional openness was abnormal or even shameful. This quote from James illustrates the uneasy relationship many of the participants had with their emotional life and its perceived origins in childhood.

**James:** *I think it was partly to do with the way I'd been brought up, you know, this is what I was expected to do, you know, there was no, you know, you might go through a whole raft of emotions but you won't show it. It's not, you've not got,*

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*there was not, you're not going to ....there was no evidence that you feel one way or another.* (122)

The pre-Royal Navy experiences of my participants were not included in this report, as they do not directly contribute to answering my research question. Further analysis of this element of my participants' transcripts in future may reveal additional findings of relevance to body of research investigating pre-disposing factors for PTSD in military populations (see for example, Carbrera et al, 2007; Schnurr & Vielhauer, 1999). The fact that many of the participants were very young at the time of active service (four were only 19 years old and another three were in their early 20s) may also be a pre-disposing factor (King et al, 1996). What is clear is that the participants in this research found the emotions that their experiences evoked difficult to understand, impossible to communicate to their partners and overwhelming in nature.

For many of them, the predominant emotion was shame, emanating from a sense of failure and a conviction that they had let their colleagues down in some way. This confirms research by Gonzalez et al (2015), Egoben et al (201) and Maguen et al (2010) on the link between trauma and shame. Under the medical model of PTSD, this would be described as part of Criteria D '*negative alterations in cognitions and mood*' and in particular, Criteria D.4 as a '*persistent negative emotional state*' (DSM-5, p178). What my research adds to this model is a possible explanatory framework of a. where these emotions come from (from existential confrontations and the fundamental changes they provoked in individuals) and b. why these emotions persist (due to an inability or

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unwillingness on the part of the individuals to understand, share and process these emotions). This has implications for clinical practice in that it underlines the importance of focusing on something more than the eradication of 'negative' emotions.

The existential model would challenge the concept of inherently 'negative' emotions. Deurzen (2007), for example, reminds us that it is the meaning we bring to the emotion that gives it a negative or positive flavour. Any emotion that is perceived as moving us away from what we want and value is perceived negatively and conversely any emotion that moves us towards what we value is experienced as positive. As Sartre (1948) reminds us, every choice, everything that happens to us, involves a loss. In this sense then, *'every affect can be seen to have a positive and a negative effect. No emotion is in itself right or wrong'* (Deurzen, 2012, p131). Again this has implications for clinical practice, and in particular suggests that the 'normalisation' of these emotions in a therapeutic setting and the repositioning of them as having something positive to offer - renewed direction, meaning and conviction - may be of value for people suffering from the symptoms of trauma.

Looking at specific emotions, shame – a sense of guilt and failure and a conviction that they had let their colleagues down in some way - was the initial and the most dominant emotion for all the participants (except Tom and Dennis).

This shame seems to have been intensified by the way in which much of the media together with their family and friends, branded them heroes, something

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all of them mentioned and most fiercely resisted.

In existential terms, shame emanates from our being-in-the-world-with-others (Heidegger, 1967) and the fact that others can judge us in ways over which we have no control (Sartre, 1943). Participants in this research were judged by many as 'heroes' and yet this seemingly positive judgment did nothing but exacerbated a deeply felt shame emanating from a conviction that they had either 'just done their job' or, in many cases, had failed to live up to the standards they expected of themselves, indeed failed to be the person they thought they were. This perhaps supports Burnell's (2007) perception that Falklands war veterans felt less worthy of respect than veterans of earlier wars.

**George:** *I mean we came back to, like, a heroes' welcome, with the families and everything coming off that airplane. But I felt ashamed because we came back without our shipmates and our ship. (40)*

The body language of the participants (particularly that of James, George, Greg, Paul, John and Arthur) as they described their sense of failure and shame indicated that they felt this emotion bodily. It was clearly something more than guilt - which for me is a sense of having done something wrong, having behaved badly or made a mistake. The sense of shame these men described sounded and appeared to me to be visceral (as Sartre describes it, an '*immediate shudder which runs through me from head to foot without any discursive preparation*' (Sartre, 1943, p246)). It was a sense not that they had *done* wrong but rather that they *were* wrong. Not that they *had failed* but that they *were failures*. Something in their very being was wrong.

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The findings of my research indicated support for an existential view of the purpose of shame as outlined by Deurzen (2007, p131) as the '*expression of one's sense of absence of what is valued*'. The participants talked a great deal about the loss of their home (the ship) and of course their shipmates. They also talked about the loss of professional pride (an important part of their identity) and the loss of the good standing or reputation of the British Navy. Nietzsche's (2014) account of guilt as indebtedness provides an existential basis for understanding my findings in relation to shame and guilt. The participants' sense of their luck and good fortune compared to others, who in some cases were seen as literally having died in their place, is clear in the findings section of this report (see Theme 1 in particular). There is also a sense in many of the participants' accounts of the urgency with which they felt the need to enter into relationships and have children. This change in priorities may well have emerged from existential guilt (Heidegger, 1927), a primordial guilt that arises from us owing something to existence e.g. from us always having a task or tasks that need to be completed in the future. Arguably my findings, taken with those in relation to Theme 1, also provide some support for Maher's (2008) view that survivor guilt may be an expression of people's confrontation with the randomness and absurdity of life.

Perhaps it is unsurprising, given the research evidence of an intimate link between shame and anger (Ellison et al, 2014; Hejdenburg & Andrews, 2011), that six of the participants in this research (James, Greg, George, Paul, Arthur and John) experienced anger and rage on their return from combat and in the coming

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months and years this became a feature of their relationships, having a devastating effect upon them. My findings also lend support to research linking combat with anger (Gonzalez et al, 2015; Egoben et al, 2010; Maguen et al, 2010; Sayer et al, 2010) and the possible mediating role for shame between the two.

There is a strong sense from the narratives of these participants that their feelings, and in particular their anger, were explosive, destructive and out of control. It was variously described as something that would '*flash*' (Greg, 10), '*smash*' (John, 167), '*explode*' (George, 78), '*erupt*' (James, 44) and send them '*up the wall*' (Arthur, 170) or '*storming out*' (Paul, 50). This inevitably affected their relationships with their partners who '*took a hard time*' (John, 167), felt they had to '*walk on eggshells*' (James, 202) and would have been '*better off without me*' (George, 62). This supports research suggesting anger and rage are commonly experienced in veterans of active service (Gonzalez, et al, 2015; Elbogen et al, 2010; Maguen et al, 2010; Sayer et al, 2010). The descriptions of anger and the impact of this anger on them also supports research by Novaco et al (2012) who found it was associated with impairments in mental health and psychosocial functioning and research by Rona et al (2015), Dyer et al (2009), Elbogen et al (2011) and others who demonstrate a link between PTSD and anger, particularly amongst military personnel who have seen combat experience. My findings in relation to Ton's experience in particular supports more existentially oriented research by McCormack and McKellar (2015) who suggest that anger following trauma can be a facilitator of posttraumatic growth, though the length of time most participants took to experience such growth was considerable in most

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cases.

Anger, as outlined above, like other emotions, such as shame and guilt, is understood in the medical model as a negative symptom (APA, 2013), but in the existential model as a call to the individual to re-examine their life or values or as an indication that they are trying to hold on to something that is threatened or lost (Deurzen, 2007). The findings of the current research in the area of anger reinforces the clinical implications outlined earlier in this section in relation to the therapeutic value that may be had from the exploration of difficult emotions and what they tell the individual.

There is no doubt that the struggle to control these difficult emotions (and an inability to express them) led them to build up inside the participants in a way that felt unbearable, making them feel exhausted or overwhelmed, which in turn refueled their anger. George used the metaphor of a sink filling up with water, but lacking an overflow to release it, to describe the build up of emotions, suggesting he was flooded or saturated by difficult feelings. Emotions indicate how we are attuned to the world (Heidegger, 1962) and the extent to which we are living in line with our values (Deurzen, 2007). For the participants in this research, however, the volume and intensity of their emotions combined with a worldview that regarded emotions in general with suspicion meant that they were unable to hear the underlying existential messages they offered. Worse than this, they had '*emotions about their emotions*' (Iacovou and Weixel-Dixon, 2014, p66) in that they felt ashamed and angry of feeling ashamed and angry. In attempting to control and suppress their feelings, many of the men in this study

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effectively cut off an important aspect of their existence, shrinking their lives and impoverishing their ability to relate to their partners. Cutting off one aspect of themselves inevitably resulted in a crippling of them all (Bugental, 1978).

### **7.6 Alienation, Withdrawal and Isolation and their Impact on Relationships (Themes 5, 6 & 7)**

*The experience of alienation is brought about through a decline in the quality of one's relationship with a particular context, and this perceived deterioration evokes dissatisfaction with the present situation and a yearning for something better which has been either lost or, as yet, unattained. (Stokols, 1975)*

Central to the themes of changing self and changing priorities is a sense of the powerlessness felt by the participants – something had happened to them, indeed been done to them, and they had suffered deep psychological wounds that they were unable to heal, or, in the case of Paul, Arthur and Ron, were unable even to recognise at the time. For many of them, the military culture based on overt masculinity and toughness (something akin to Keeling's (2014) 'Bravado versus emotion' theme) was combined with an upbringing in which there were few or no opportunities to develop emotional literacy. Rather than seeing emotions as attempts to manipulate reality (Sartre, 1939) offering powerful ways of gaining insight into their way of being in the world (Deurzen, 2002), emotions were dangerous, irrational and shameful and needed to be controlled, suppressed and hidden away.

My findings show that many of the participants (Tom and Dennis were the exceptions) were convinced that no one would be able to understand their



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experiences. It could be that this was exacerbated by the stance they took to their emotional world (the sense that they could not and/or should not share their emotions with anyone). As a result, many of the participants felt unable to share their feelings with their partners and ultimately were prevented from transforming their pain into self-awareness, growth and resilience. The impact on their relationships of this emotional numbing supports research by (1998) who found that the emotional numbing symptoms of PTSD in particular were strongly related to relationship quality.

Some of the participants also described themselves as having made decisions about relationships, marriage and children, when they were somehow not themselves or not in a fit state to make such life changing choices. They seemed to be reflecting on an alienation from their 'real selves', a sense of 'otherness' or lack of recognition of who they were at that time. This sense of alienation from themselves (and increasingly from others) became a lasting theme within their lives.

**Greg:** *Em, I was different. Em, cause I'd done something, seen things, experienced things...that not many people around me had experienced. (74)*

The DSM-5 (2013, p162) describes '*feelings of detachment or estrangement from others*' as a symptom of PTSD and much of psychiatry considers it the result of an attempt to block or dissociate from difficult feelings. While this is one possible perspective on the sense of alienation described by my participants, the medical model once again pathologises what in existential terms can be explained without the need to resort to the language of illness and in a way that leaves the

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power for change firmly in the hands of the individual rather than an expert doctor or therapist. For the Existential Counselling Psychologist, alienation is merely a mode of existence, like any other mode, albeit one that is '*achieved only by outrageous violence perpetrated by human beings on human beings*' (Laing & Esterson, 1990, p78). A more optimistic view of alienation is proposed by Hegel (and is arguably the foundation for an existential view of the concept) in which alienation is seen as something that an individual comes to recognize in themselves and ultimately therefore enables them to be at home with themselves (Hegel, 1977). Thus for Hegel, alienation is a means for growth (in the case of my participants, could be explained as a means for posttraumatic growth). Kierkegaard is arguably less optimistic than Hegel, seeing alienation as not being true to oneself, a form of inauthenticity and a condition of the human situation (Kierkegaard, 1962). This position is echoed by Heidegger (1962, p220) who describes inauthenticity as our '*fallness, a normal, everyday state and that kind of Being which is closest to Dasein and in which Dasein maintains itself for the most part*'.

What a psychoanalyst might consider the result of a split between the conscious and the unconscious mind (Freud, 2005), I, as an Existential Counselling Psychologist, would consider a normal, indeed *the* normal, state of existence. It is something that we can alleviate to some extent as we become more authentic, by standing back from what Sartre (1948) describes as 'the herd' of other people and living life more in line with what we hold as core values. Hence there is opportunity for growth in alienation as Hegel speculates, but we cannot escape

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alienation altogether, as it is a given of human existence (Yalom, 1980). This has implications for clinical practice as it infers that a 'cure' for the 'symptom' of alienation is not achievable. Rather a state of acceptance of alienation and the ability to move beyond it at points is a more realistic therapeutic goal.

Harmand et al's (1993) view that alienation is part of an existential model of PTSD is therefore both supported and undermined by my findings, therefore. Alienation is actually a normal condition of existence. Perhaps in PTSD it is a heightened, sudden and all encompassing awareness of one's alienation that occurs.

The findings of this research show that my participants responded to increasing feelings of alienation from themselves and the world by withdrawing into themselves, retreating from their partners, backing out of social activities and choosing to spend time alone and/or away from home where possible. This withdrawal was described by participants as a way of shutting themselves down, protecting themselves and their partners from their overwhelming emotions. This finding supports previous research by Keeling (2014) that indicates that '*bravado versus emotion*' is a dilemma military couples have to negotiate following deployment.

The nature and extent of the withdrawal found in this research is not adequately covered in the medical model of PTSD. The DSM-5's (2013, 161) Criteria C does describe (see Appendix 1) persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the traumatic event(s). My findings indicate, however, that the withdrawal and avoidance is much more universal than that suggested by this criterion. The

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participants sought to retract from the world around them in its entirety, reducing their engagement with the world as a whole, and in particular minimising their contact – emotional, physical or spatial - with their partners. This way of being in the world was described by the participants both as coping mechanism and as a reflection of the fact that they felt different from others and somehow dangerous to be around. Yalom (1980) describes three kinds of isolation, interpersonal (or loneliness), intrapersonal (isolation from one's true self) and existential (the unbridgeable gap between ourselves and the world). It is this final form of isolation that participants in this research describe when they talk about a longing to be understood by their partners, to be truly known, combined with an awareness that this can not be.

*The existential conflict is thus, the tension between our awareness of our absolute isolation and our wish to be part of a larger whole. (Yalom, 1980, p. 9).*

Arthur's words below bring Yalom's description of this existential condition to life:

**Arthur:** *So, unless you've actually had that experience, to me you will never understand it. You might think you understand it. You might have a perception of what it's like. But you don't know how that individual felt about that situation. And...hence I'd fail to see the point of telling anybody, so they didn't have to think about it cause they couldn't really understand it. (119)*

Arthur's words are also reminiscent of Harmand et al's (1993, p283) existential symptoms of trauma, which they say include the '*incapacity to convey that which is beyond description*'.

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My research adds to the medical model in that it situates the alienation and withdrawal within a context (e.g. it illustrates that it is a response to a confrontation with existential givens and the overwhelming emotions they provoke). This suggests that the medical model provides an insufficient basis for understanding and treating posttraumatic stress, echoing Deurzen-Smith's (1997,p14) criticism of therapeutic models that focus on the intra-psychic, defining human experience as self-sufficient, which she says increasingly isolates people within '*an anthropocentric universe of their own making*'.

This research also found that this alienation and withdrawal had a devastating impact on the participants' intimate relationships. Six of the participants (only Tom, Dennis and John were exceptions) attributed marriage or relationship breakdowns to their alienation and withdrawal from their partners. This supports research that demonstrates that emotional numbing and withdrawal related symptoms of PTSD are strongly related to relationship quality (Riggs et al, 1998)

My findings demonstrate the long term impact that traumatic experiences had on the wellbeing of my participants who described going to a dark place dominated by re-experiencing the traumatic events in flashbacks and nightmares, excessive drinking, picking fights and/or verbal or physical abuse of their partners.

Flashbacks are addressed by Criteria B in the DSM-5 (2013, p161) descriptors of PTSD (see Appendix 1). The phenomenon of flashbacks, together with other symptoms of PTSD such as hyperarousal, are said to have their physiological roots in our instinctual responses to fight, flee or freeze in response to trauma

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(Levine, 1997, 2006) and our 'triune brain' with its Reptilian, Paleomammalian and Neomammalian complexes (MacClean, 1990). These theories suggest that posttraumatic stress arises when the individual freezes in response to trauma but is unable to 'reset' or return their physiological response to normal once the threat has gone. The neurobiology of this phenomenon has not been fully explained but a great deal of research does indicate that the amygdala and related structures (in the Paleomammalian, emotional brain) are overactive and the hippocampus and anterior cingulate cortex (in the Neomammalian, cognitive brain) are underactive in individuals with PTSD (Koenigs & Grafman, 2009; McCormack & McKellar, 2015; Depue et al, 2014; Thomaes et al, 2015). My literature review found no existential theories to explain flashbacks, and I would suggest Existential Counselling Psychologists would be happy to accept that PTSD has a neurological element (an embodied element), indeed this is something Oakley (2009) discusses in her review of existential treatment for PTSD in victims of the 2005 London bombings. From a therapeutic point of view, flashbacks would be treated by the Existential Counselling Psychologist as a mode of existence and consciousness that has equal validity to any other mode of consciousness (in the same way that dreams are considered by existential thinkers (Moustakis, 1993)).

Regardless of their origins, my research showed that flashbacks and nightmares and the despair they evoked had a negative effect on the relationships of my participants, both directly (in the form of lost sleep, violence inflicted during a nightmare, loss of sense of masculinity in own and partner's eyes) and indirectly,

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as a result of the drinking, fighting and interpersonal violence that resulted from their attempts to cope with this despair.

The high level of reported alcohol misuse/abuse in my study supports research by Ramchand et al (2012) and others (Fear et al, 2010; Jacobson et al, 2008; Gaher et al, 2014) who found that combat related traumas and psychological distress are positively associated with the frequency of drinking behaviours. My findings also support Thandi et al's (2015) research demonstrating that remission of PTSD symptoms was associated with decreased use of alcohol (Thandi et al, 2015) as my participants reported reduced levels of alcohol consumption following breakdown and treatment for PTSD. Participants in my study appeared to use alcohol to help them deal with painful emotions, supporting research by Simpson et al (2012) and also research Gaher et al (2014) that found that lack of emotional clarity contributed to increased drinking in military personnel with PTSD. An existential view on this phenomenon was presented by Roos et al (2015), who suggest that a temptation to drink is associated with lower purpose in life scores in combat experienced military populations. My research demonstrates that combat exposes servicemen to existential confrontations and for many results in a loss of a previously held worldview and therefore could be seen as support for Roos et al's (2015) study. This would also support Frankl's (1986) notion that existential crises can lead to existential neuroses such as addictions to attempt to fill an existential vacuum created by a traumatic situation.

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Four of the participants reported that they deliberately sought out opportunities to fight with other men following their return from the Falklands. This provides some support for research indicating a link between deployment and/or PTSD and increased violence in service personnel (Gallway et al, 2012; Thomas et al, 2010, MacManus et al, 2015). The DSM-5 describes such violence as a symptom of PTSD (*E.1 Irritable behaviour and angry outbursts typically expressed as verbal or physical aggression towards people or objects* (DSM-5 2013). As such it gives us little insight into the reasons for the link. The participants in the current research offered some clues into the root of their desire to fight – a sense that others didn't understand what they had gone through but felt able to discuss it a need to find a way to discharge pent up emotions that threatened to overwhelm them. These findings suggest that the reasons for violence and fighting in previous research are complex and multi-faceted and exploration of such anger may indeed offer insights into the losses felt by the individuals (Deurzen, 2002).

Four of the participants reported verbal and/or physical abuse of their partners (Intimate Partner Violence of IPV). Research on the impact of combat on the incidence rate of IPV has mixed findings, but most recent studies show high/raised incidences compared to the general population (Orcutt et al, 2003; Rabenhorst et al, 2012; Sullivan & Elbogen, 2014)) with only one or two older studies not demonstrating this link (see, for example, Hiley-Young, 1995). The dominant paradigms in research into IPV and its treatment are those of sociological feminism (Bograd, 1988; Walker, 1989) which proposes that relationship violence is a means for men to enforce their patriarchal power,



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attachment theory derived models (Downey & Feldman, 1996) that suggest violence is down to a heightened need for reassurance, and cognitive models (Holtzworth-Munroe et al, 1998) that seek to identify and address the thoughts and feelings underlying problematic relationship patterns. The existential model of relationship violence is '*underdeveloped*' (Adams & Jepson, 2013, p202), however I would suggest that an existential model would reject research that suggests that IPV is a unitary phenomenon that can be understood and addressed through application of a single theoretical framework. Sartre (1962) describes the use of coercion and dominance as a strategy used to try to manage the unpredictability of relationships and reduce our fear of our partner's freedom to choose (for example to choose to leave us). Adams and Jepson (2013) describe relationship violence as a potential response to one of life's unsolvable paradoxes – the need we have both to express our individuality and to belong. Finally, Cavanagh et al's (2001) research identifying the abdication of responsibility for violence exhibited by perpetrators was supported by my study as participants said that at the time they were violent they blamed their partners (though they have since taken responsibility for their actions). This has implications for clinical practice with military personnel with a history of relationship violence as it infers an examination of freedom and responsibility may be an appropriate therapeutic goal.

My participants who were violent towards their partners made an explicit link between their PTSD and their violence, supporting research showing the positive link between the two (Hahn et al, 2015) and demonstrated in ex-serving

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personnel by Marshall et al (2005). Levels of psychological violence amongst combat veterans is thought to be much higher (Trevillion et al (2015), for example, found rates of 91%). My research supports the existence of psychological violence in combat veterans, but not to the levels suggested by Trevillion et al (2015). Contradictory studies by Tharp et al (2014) who found no association between PTSD and IPV and Bradley (2007) would found that ex-servicemen were less likely to perpetrate IPV than men in the general population are also partly supported by my research, therefore. Again, this suggests that additional research on IPV in military and ex-military populations would help to clarify the picture in this area and help inform policy and practice in relation to this phenomenon.

Overall, the findings of my research in relation to Themes 5, 6 and 7 provide support for research demonstrating the link between mental health issues and relationship difficulties (Deke & Monson, 2010; Dirkzwager et al, 2005) and in particular a strong association between PTSD and symptoms or behaviours associated with trauma and intimate relationship issues (Taft et al, 2011; Renshaw et al, 2009).

## **7.7 Breaking down and its impact on individuals and relationships**

### **(Theme 8)**

The current study found that for many of my participants (only Tom, Dennis and John were exceptions), active service ultimately led to a breaking down of their ability to function in their day-to-day lives. This breakdown was precipitated in each case by a new trauma or a series of stressful life events occurring many years after active service. Five of the participants were diagnosed with PTSD (DSM-5, 2013), their experiences offering support for the link between combat and PTSD. This could be taken as support for research speculating on the existence of delayed trauma (Horesh et al, 2015; Horesh et al, 1982), newly defined in the DSM-5 (2013) as occurring when an individual doesn't meet the full criteria for diagnosis until six months or longer after the event that precipitated the symptoms. However, the accounts of my participants seem to indicate that the symptoms of trauma existed for many years prior to their diagnosis with PTSD, offering more support for suggestions that delayed PTSD is not a phenomenon in itself but actually describes late diagnosis of an already existing disorder following the worsening of existing symptoms (Horesh et al, 2015).

There is very little research on delayed onset PTSD even though it is of increasing relevance at a time when increased life expectancy and increased numbers of veterans expose increasing number of people to the risk of its occurrence. Psychodynamic, cognitive and biological models have been proposed (Kolb, 1983; Ehlers & Clark, 2000; Pitman, 1989) but the mechanisms

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of this form of PTSD remain poorly understood. My research perhaps provides most support for a 'life change model' or 'vulnerability perspective' (Horesh, et al, 2011) and the idea that life stressors finally exhaust the greatly depleted resources available to those suffering PTSD. This highlights the importance of timely assessment and intervention for military personnel at risk of developing PTSD not only on return from active service but also in the following years and decades.

### **7.8 Growth and resilience following active service and its impact on individuals and relationships (Themes 9 & 10)**

My findings show that the time of breakdown and/or diagnosis of PTSD created some difficulties for the participants, precipitating as it did initially further feelings of isolation, increased withdrawal and further disruption of communication and connection between couples (confirming Allen et al's (2010) research in this area). However, the breakdown/diagnosis was for most participants a turning point in their relationships with their partners, offering an opportunity for growth and resilience.

Sharing their thoughts and feelings on active service with their partners seems to have been a life and relationship changing experience for most of the participants, as Greg, vividly described it, it was a coming out of sorts.

**Greg:** *I liken it to a gay man confessing his, em, his homosexuality. It was like, you know what? I went through the Falklands. This is who I am. This is what I did. This is what it meant to me.*

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The positive impact of sharing their experiences supports studies that indicate that social support is important in coping with combat stress (Keane et al, 1986; Solomon et al, 1990b).

I would argue that my findings also indicate that trauma is a socially embedded experience (Iacovou and Wiexel-Dixon, 2015) in that it is experienced in a social context, embedded in the cultural values in which the individual operates, and concerned with loss of meaning that the individual has created in a shared environment. As Bracken (2002, p148) states '*If trauma is about broken meanings, then it is a social phenomenon through and through*'. This has implications for clinical practice as intra-psychic models like CBT don't adequately address the social significance of trauma and nor do they equip the individual to explore the loss of meaning in the social context in which they operate.

Ultimately my research demonstrates that '*delayed onset posttraumatic growth*' (a term I have coined having been unable to find any terms for this phenomenon in the literature) can occur many years (in some cases many decades) after the trauma is experienced. This growth seems to have been achieved through increased sharing with partners but also the way that support or treatment for PTSD enabled the participants to bring new meaning to their experiences in the Falkland Islands (supporting the existential view of trauma as challenging individuals to find meaning (Frankl, 1986; Sartre, 1943)). My findings show that this growth had a very positive effect on my participants' ability to enter into and maintain more authentic relationships with others, supporting research on

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positive outcomes possible following traumatic experiences (Sledge et al, 1980; Tsai et al, 2015) (albeit outcomes that took some time, for the majority of the participants, to manifest themselves. Perhaps my study also supports Tsai et al's (2015) finding that individuals with higher levels of PTSD experience higher levels of posttraumatic growth. While Tom did not experience the devastating impact of trauma upon his wellbeing, his opportunities for posttraumatic growth were thereby limited. I am not sure, however, that the other participants in this study would regard their posttraumatic growth as being worth the hefty price they paid.

### **7.9 Tom's Story**

As highlighted above, Tom's experiences were significantly different in many ways to those of his fellow participants. Like the other participants, his experiences of active service resulted in a sudden confrontation with existential givens. Also like the other participants, this confrontation changed him and his priorities in some ways. However, unlike the other participants, the confrontation didn't have a significant impact on him emotionally, and apart from some minor anxiety evoked in the short term by the sound of fighter jets overhead, he didn't experience symptoms of trauma. Tom reported positive changes in himself following his experience of active service, supporting research by Newby et al (2005) and also in his relationship (supporting research by Wick & Nelson (2014)) who found that couples with low levels of posttraumatic symptoms and high levels of relationship satisfaction can recognise opportunities for growth in experiences of trauma. His narrative

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offered evidence of posttraumatic growth (Tsai et al, 2015) in the immediate weeks and months following active service.

There are a number of demographic factors that differentiate Tom from the rest of the participants in this research and that may help explain this difference in outcome:

- He joined the Royal Navy at a later age than the other participants (24 compared to an average age at joining of 17)
- He was educated to degree level and joined the Navy as a Commissioned Officer (the rest of the participants joined as ratings)
- He trained as a Royal Marine Commando, unlike the other participants. Some research indicates Royal Marines suffer less from mental health problems and have less pre-deployment risk factors (Forbes et al, 2011). This is backed up by research with paratroopers, a similar branch within the army (McMillan & Rachman, 1987)
- He had been happily married for 10 years at the time of active service, unlike most of the other participants. His account therefore supports Wick & Nelson's (2014) suggestion that couples with high levels of relationship satisfaction and low levels of posttraumatic symptoms are able to recognise opportunities for growth in their relationship.

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- His experience of active service was mainly on land, rather than on board a ship (unlike all the other participants apart from Arthur who spent time both on a ship and on land). Tom had more freedom of movement than the other participants. He himself commented on how much better he felt on shore when he could build himself a Sanger than he did on the boat just waiting to be hit by a bomb or missile.
- Unlike almost all the other participants, Tom did not experience a trauma or traumatic loss in his childhood, adolescence or early adulthood.
- Tom experienced/witnessed more active and direct forms of combat than the other participants whose experiences on ships did not involve direct contact with enemy forces. Research showing that the intensity of combat in the Falklands War was positively associated with PTSD symptoms (O'Brien & Hughes, 1991) is therefore not supported by my findings.
- Finally, as my research has shown, PTSD and/or symptoms of trauma are mediating factors in the impact of active service on relationships. Tom did not experience significant symptoms of PTSD or trauma and this may be a significant reason why active service did not have a negative impact on his relationship.



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Whatever the reasons, Tom's exposure to existential givens seems to have resulted in posttraumatic growth both for him and for his relationship. He was able to face up to what it means to die and become stronger for it (Deurzen, 2002; Yalom, 1980). This was something other participants were unable to achieve for many years.

### 7.10 Clinical Implications

Some of the clinical implications of my research findings are outlined in the table below:

*Table 12 Clinical Implications of the Findings*

Finding	Clinical Implications
Existential confrontations as possible mediator between combat and symptoms of trauma	Preventative psycho-education Wellbeing training
Existential confrontations create 'life opening opportunity' (Jacobsen, 2006)	Recognition and acknowledgement of this in pre and post deployment briefings Change management education (personal change and its impact)
Existential confrontations change individuals and their priorities in life and relationships	Relationship therapy – to include opportunities for exploration of the implications of these changes and negotiation of joint ways forward
Existential crisis results from shattering of worldview – experienced in all four worlds – and accompanying loss of meaning	Early/timely identification and support is key Post deployment assessment and regular ongoing assessments thereafter Exploration of previous worldview and discussion of alternative meanings and values Exploration of individual's freedom to choose

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PTSD is a socially embedded phenomenon – impact on interpersonal relations is fundamental to the experience	<p>Psycho-education involving partners/family members</p> <p>Therapeutic interventions involving partners/family members</p>
Sub-threshold PTSD may exist for decades – breakdown triggered by later stressor/trauma	<p>Identification and intervention at an earlier stage vitally important</p> <p>Post deployment assessment and regular ongoing assessments thereafter</p>
Shame and alienation partly cause of failure to share experiences/anger and violence	<p>Normalisation of ‘symptoms’ as more than physical, instinctive responses</p> <p>Reframing the ‘disorder’ – perhaps as an ‘injury’</p>

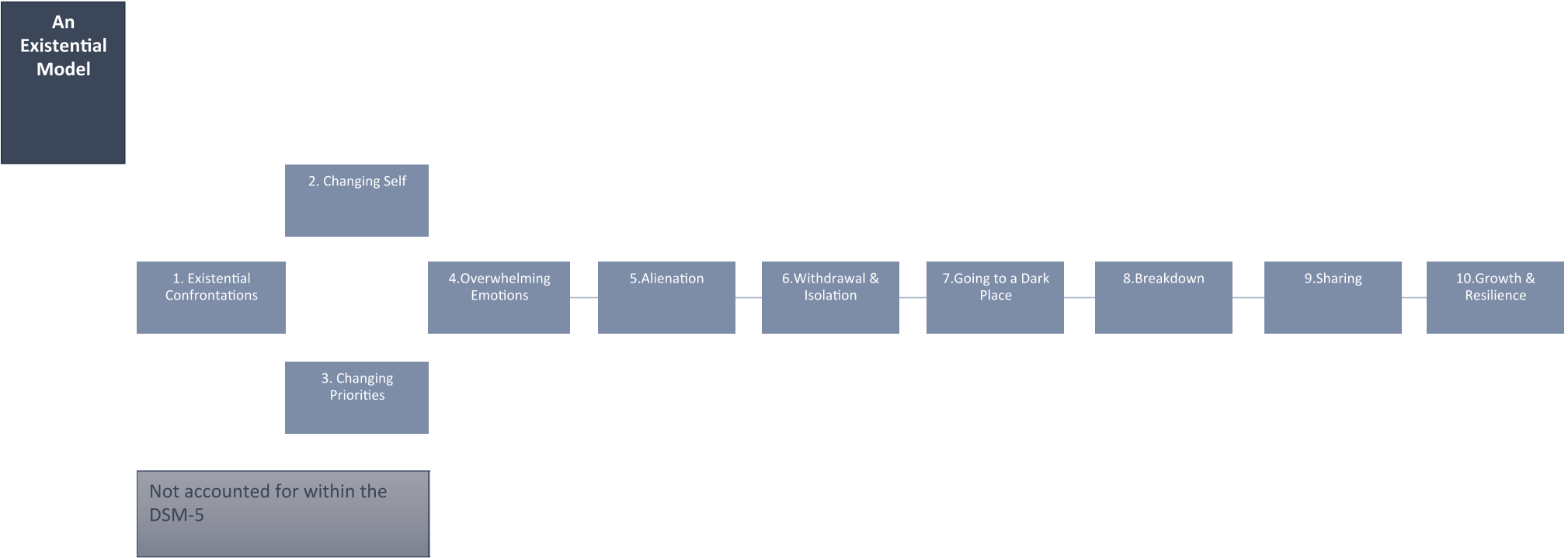
## **8. Conclusions**

### **8.1 An Existential Counselling Psychology Framework for the Treatment of Post Traumatic Stress**

As outlined in the discussion, the existential counselling psychology perspective offers an additional, arguably more complete, understanding of the impact of active service on ex-servicemen, and therefore on their relationships, than that offered by the medical model with its focus on PTSD as a disorder or illness with accompanying symptoms, and potential cures through the reduction or elimination of those symptoms.

The existential counselling paradigm rejects models and typologies as contradictory to its origins within an idiopathic philosophy. It also acknowledges the socially embedded nature of trauma (Bracken, 2002). We are beings in the world and our meanings are found in the world within the social context in which we live. Finally, it accepts that trauma is something that reveals the anxiety of existence, rather than creating it (Iacovou & Weixel-Dixon, 2015) and hence normalises much of what is experienced during posttraumatic stress. The findings from my research suggest an alternative view of posttraumatic stress to that proposed by the medical model (see Figure 2 below).

**Figure 2:** The Medical Model and an Existential Framework of PTSD



Clients who experience fragmentation of their world and are overcome with difficult emotions, unable to make sense of their crisis (Barnett, 2009) need to be encouraged first to 'put on the brakes' (Rothschild, 2000, p102). - to find time to reflect on their embodied experience of trauma and find way to protect themselves from the overwhelming feelings and hyper arousal through the development of appropriate strategies for focusing on the present and not on the past. As was observed earlier in this report, the participants in my research described their experiences in temporal terms, and temporality was an existential given that featured implicitly in their narratives (though it was not mentioned explicitly). Only after the client is able to situate themselves firmly in the present in the therapeutic setting can be in a position to explore the impact of the trauma on the four worlds of their existence (physical, personal, social and spiritual (Deurzen, 2002)).

Existential counselling-psychologists reject models that attempt to describe any psychological phenomenon or its therapeutic exploration in a rigid, methodical or prescribed manner. I therefore offer the following existential counselling psychology framework for working with trauma tentatively and in the hope it will stimulate further research in this area. It should not be considered definitive nor as an 'expert' opinion on the experience of Posttraumatic Stress. All I can say is that an existential framework of understanding should include recognition that:

- It is important to assist the client in creating a safe place for the therapy (Oakley, 2009) before we undertake any form of descriptively focused work.

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There is a need to enable the client to reflect on the embodied nature of their experience and recognise and become confident of ways to manage their embodied responses to their experiences

- The problems caused by trauma have their root in the existential vacuum (Frankl, 1986) provoked by a confrontation with existential givens, which shatters or significantly disturbs the client's worldview
- An existential vacuum is characterised by feelings of alienation and loss of meaning, which in turn create existential awareness (Yalom and Lieberman, 1991) and accompanying overwhelming emotions
- These emotions together with their attempts to deal with them through drinking, fighting, violence, etc. represent frantic attempts by the individual to avoid the angst that arises from being confronted by existential givens and having their worldview destabilised or destroyed
- These responses are all ways of being in the world that can be explored therapeutically in terms of their positive and negative impact on the individual and on their relationships, and importantly the extent to which they help the individual identify a new life meaning upon which to base their values and ultimately a new worldview
- The aim is not to extinguish 'symptoms' but to hear what these symptoms have to tell the individual about their way of being in the world in the past, the present and the future and to help them identify less clumsy ways to deal with the normal anxiety of existence
- There is no experience that is inherently traumatic in and of itself (Bracken, 2002) in that it is our intentionality towards the world that imbues it with

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this meaning. This doesn't down play or reduce the suffering experienced but rather reminds us that the meaning of anything is flexible and can be changed. The focus is upon allowing the individual to see the life opening opportunities offered by the trauma and enabling them to recognise their ability to choose from a range of potential responses to that trauma (what Harmand et al, 1993, p284 describe in their existential model of trauma as *'the inherence of freedom and responsibility'*)

- The Existential Counselling Psychologist's role in this process is not one of treatment provider or expert or medical professional, but rather is one of fellow traveller, encouraging the individual to describe their experiences and in doing so to hear themselves and be heard; to clarify and understand
- Set in the present and not in the past, it is the relationship and the being with qualities of the Existential Counselling Psychologist that provide the unique setting in which the client's lived reality can be expressed and examined

Clearly existential therapy will not suit everyone (as Deurzen, 2008, suggests, it requires that people be willing to confront the realities of existence with courage and honesty). However, based as it is on what it means to be human, and the concerns and issues that are universal to all, it is arguably the only therapeutic orientation that can claim to be of relevance to all human beings in any time or culture. My research demonstrates that the experience of trauma together with our responses to trauma, are underpinned by basic existential conditions that are indicative of what it means to be human. The role of existential counselling psychology is to support the individual while they are in 'existential limbo'

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(Harmand et al, 1993), trying to make sense of the world and the transitory nature of life. An existential understanding of the world and their place in it adds to the client's understanding not only of their experience of trauma but of their place in the world as a whole, empowering the individual, normalising their experience, the extent of their freedom to choose and the limitations upon them.

*The hope would be for the therapist to provide an opening for the client to express, to the best of their ability, how they are affected by the event: what it means for the values and expectations that have so far underpinned their worldview, what it means for their perspectives on the past and the future, and how this event and the consequent understandings might be integrated* (Iacovou & Weixel-Dixon, 2014, p166).

As stated previously, I would argue that my research demonstrates the potential impact existential counselling might have in helping clients address the impact of trauma on their lives. Further research would of course be necessary to examine its efficacy if we are to secure its place as a recommended treatment of choice. Research such as this is said by many existential practitioners to be antithetical to the existential approach but, as Cooper (2008) the failure of existential counselling psychology to engage with the debate around evidence based practice in counselling psychology may ultimately result in the paradigm being side-lined outside mainstream practice. At the very least, existential counselling psychology surely has a place within an integrative model, together with some of the more cognitive-behavioural therapies for PTSD, for example. Clearly the philosophical underpinnings of the two approaches are radically different but this should not prevent us from working towards a therapeutic approach that



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may be more effective in relieving the distress of those who experience trauma that results in negative impacts upon their lives.

The devastating impact of active service on the intimate relationships of ex-servicemen as demonstrated in this research (particularly where symptoms of trauma exist and persist) should be motivation enough for this enterprise. If additional motivation is needed, however, we need look no further than the lessons learnt from the Vietnam war. Research on the impact of this war on US veterans, led initially to conclusions that it was a psychiatric success (Jones & Wessley, 2005). Twenty eight years later, research by Schnurr et al (2003) found that a shocking 80% of veterans of this war reported symptoms of PTSD. My research suggests it is worth investigating the impact of war in the Falkland Islands (also declared a psychiatric success by Price, 1984 and Jones & Lovett, 1987) on those who served there, if only to ensure that these veterans are not facing similarly high levels of delayed or chronic PTSD.

Finally, my research demonstrates that PTSD is not simply a 'disorder'. On the contrary, the so called symptoms of trauma emerge as a natural and rational response to a confrontation with existential givens and trauma is situated firmly within a list of fundamental aspects of human experience (Gold, 2008). It may be ambitious to hope it could be reframed within the medical community, but perhaps it could in future be described as an 'injury' – an injury to the person's way of being in the world, to their worldview and their values and beliefs. The move away from the medical terminology of disorders and illnesses towards

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something less pejorative may be more palatable to military personnel in particular and may enable more of them to seek timely and appropriate support.

### **8.2 Limitations of the Research and Implications for Further Research**

The limitations of this research include the following:

1. This is a qualitative research project carried out using IPA and as such does not prove any hypotheses or provide us with any generalizable findings.
2. The research question includes an assumption that there is an impact of active service on intimate relationships of ex-servicemen.
3. The participants were self selecting and may not have volunteered for the study had they now felt they had something to say on the topic in question e.g. if they had not found that active service impacted on their relationships.
4. The research includes participants from one war and one military service (The Royal Navy) and may not apply to ex-servicemen from other services or other wars.
5. I was unable to gather a complete relationship history for each of the participants in the time available for interview, therefore there maybe additional information that sheds a different light on their narratives.
6. My relationship with the topic was a personal and intense one and will have affected my findings.
7. The study relies only on the reflections of the ex-servicemen themselves and doesn't include those of their partners.

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In light of these limitations, and taking into account the research findings, the following additional areas of research deserve exploration:

1. Research on the impact of active service in the Falklands War on veterans of this war to confirm whether this war was indeed a 'psychiatric success'.
2. Additional research on the impact of active service on the intimate relationships of ex-servicemen from different armed services and from other conflicts, to give an indication of the extent to which my findings are applicable to a wider group.
3. Additional research on the impact of active service on UK military personnel themselves (rather than on their wives/partners) to give greater depth to existing academic knowledge and provide additional context for my study.
4. Further research on the impact of active service on the *quality* of military relationships (rather than focusing on marriage dissatisfaction and divorce rates, for example) to build on the small body of research covering this topic and give indications as to where relationship counselling might be focused.
5. Additional research looking at relationships in general (not just marriages), and examining them over time, to give a greater picture of the longitudinal impact of active service on relationships.
6. Research on hardiness and resilience and existential wellbeing as preventative or protective factors for military personnel facing combat.
7. Additional research on the impact of childhood trauma or loss to determine whether this increases the likelihood of military personnel suffering from PTSD and experiencing related difficulties in their relationships.

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8. Research exploring the clinical implications of the concept that confrontation with existential givens encourages people to live authentically and in line with their values, to determine what can be done to encourage posttraumatic growth following traumatic experiences.
9. Research into the mediating role of shame as part of the link between combat experience and anger to explore therapeutic implications of dealing with shame as a central part of the experience of PTSD.
10. Research to investigate the possible applications and effectiveness of an existential framework of trauma treatment within military and general populations.

#### **8.4 A Final Thought**

A 2005 paper by Iverson et al (rather chillingly entitled, in light of my findings, “Goodbye and good luck’: the mental health needs and treatment experiences of British ex-service personnel’) pointed out that little was known about the psychological health of ex-servicemen or about their access to, and the effectiveness of, appropriate treatment. Forty four percent of their sample of almost 500 servicemen had a psychiatric diagnosis (most commonly depression) and yet only half of those had sought help. Those that did seek help tended to be treated with anti-depressants, with only 4% receiving Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Despite the Government’s Military Charter, introduced in 2000 to ensure that obligations between the nation and the Armed Forces are fulfilled, I suspect that little has changed for ex-servicemen since 2005. For many years, in most cases for decades, the participants in my study remained invisible victims

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of a war that had a devastating impact on them and on their relationships. The community of counselling psychologists has a role, indeed a duty, to bring the plight of ex-servicemen into the light, informing policy makers and provoking real change.

I conclude this report back where I started it, with a bit of poetry; an excerpt from a poem written by the wife of Nicholas Lutwyche, Falklands Veteran and Poet, whose poem introduced these pages.

### **Deconstruction**

In our house is a painting of the ship that battled  
crashing oceans and floated my husband to his War.  
Tiny men line the decks at attention, in full dress,  
ready for the welcome of Queen and Country.  
My husband is one of them.

We have an understanding, his ship and his wife.  
Displayed in our American home, I pass her every day.  
I know they are locked in an unending embrace.  
She is his beloved and his nemesis, sometimes an unwitting  
partner to another deconstruction. His.

By Lisa S. Lutwyche

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**Appendices**

# The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen

## An Existential-Phenomenological Study

### Appendix 1 Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Diagnostic Criteria

DSM-5 (2013)

Note: the following criteria apply to adults, adolescents, and children older than 6 years. For children 6 years and younger, see corresponding criteria below.

- A. Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one (or more) of the following ways:
1. Directly experiencing the traumatic event(s).
  2. Witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others.
  3. Learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend. In cases of actual or threatened death of a family member or friend the event(s) must have been violent or accidental.
  4. Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s) (e.g., first responders collecting human remains; police officers repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse).
- Note:** Criterion A4 does not apply to exposure through electronic media, television, movies or pictures, unless this exposure is work related.
- B: Presence of one (or more) of the following intrusion symptoms associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning after the traumatic event(s) occurred:
1. Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive distressing memories of the traumatic event(s).  
**Note:** In children older than 6 years, repetitive play may occur in which themes or aspects of the traumatic event(s) are expressed.
  2. Recurrent distressing dreams in which the content and/or affect of the dream are related to the traumatic event(s).  
**Note:** In children, there may be frightening dreams without recognisable content.
  3. Dissociative reactions (e.g. flashbacks) in which the individual feels or acts as if the traumatic event(s) were recurring. (Such reactions may occur on a continuum, with the most extreme expression being a complete loss of awareness of present surroundings.)  
**Note:** In children, trauma-specific re-enactment may occur in play.
- C: Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning after the traumatic event(s) occurred, as evidenced by one or both of the following:
1. Avoidance of or efforts to avoid distressing memories, thoughts or feelings about or closely associated with the traumatic event(s).
  2. Avoidance of or efforts to avoid external reminders (people, places, conversations, activities, objects, situations) that arouse distressing memories, thoughts or feelings about or closely associated with the traumatic event(s).
- D. Negative alterations in cognitions and mood associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning or worsening after the traumatic event(s) occurred, as evidenced by two or more of the following
1. Inability to remember an important aspect of the traumatic event(s) (typically due to dissociative amnesia and not to other factors such as head injury, alcohol, or drugs).
  2. Persistent and exaggerated negative beliefs or expectations about oneself, others or the world (e.g. 'I am bad', 'No one can be trusted', 'The world is completely dangerous', 'My whole nervous system is completely ruined').
  3. Persistent, distorted cognitions about the cause or consequences of the traumatic event(s) that lead the individual to blame himself/herself or others.

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4. Persistent negative emotional state (e.g., fear, horror, anger, guilt or shame).
5. Markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities.
6. Feelings of detachment or estrangement from others.
7. Persistent inability to experience positive emotions (e.g., inability to experience happiness, satisfaction or loving feelings).

E: Marked alterations in arousal and reactivity associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning or worsening after the traumatic event(s) occurred, as evidenced by two (or more) of the following:

1. Irritable behaviour and angry outbursts (with little or no provocation) typically expressed as verbal or physical aggression toward people or objects.
2. Reckless or self-destructive behaviour.
3. Hypervigilance.
4. Exaggerated startle response.
5. Problems with concentration
6. Sleep disturbance (e.g., difficulty falling or staying asleep or restless sleep).

F: Duration of the disturbance (Criteria B, C D, and E) is more than 1 month.

G: The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning.

H: The disturbance is not attributable to the physiological effects of a substance (e.g., medication, alcohol) or another medical condition.

*Specify whether:*

With dissociative symptoms: The individual's symptoms meet the criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder and, in addition, in response to the stressor, the individual experiences persistent or recurrent symptoms of the following:

1. **Depersonalisation:** Persistent or recurrent experiences of feeling detached from, and as if one were an outside observer of, one's mental processes or body (e.g., feeling as though one were in a dream; feeling a sense of unreality of self or body or of time moving slowly).
2. **Derealisation:** Persistent or recurrent experiences of unreality of surroundings (e.g., the world around the individual is experienced as unreal, dreamlike, distant or distorted).

**Note:** To use this subtype, the dissociative symptoms must not be attributable to the physiological effects of a substance (e.g., blackouts, behaviour during alcohol intoxication) or another medical condition (e.g., complex partial seizures).

*Specify if:*

**With delayed expression:** If the full diagnostic criteria are not met until at least 6 months after the event (although the onset and expression of some symptoms may be immediate).

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**Appendix 2: Interview Questions (Pilot and Revised)**

**Draft Interview Schedule**

1. Can you tell me about your military career?  
*Possible prompts: why did you join? what were your expectations? why did you leave?*
2. Can you tell me about your experience/s of active service?  
*Possible prompts: what did you expect? what did you do to prepare? how did reality compare to your expectations?*
3. Did your experience/s of active service change you in any way?  
*Possible prompts: in what ways? how did/do you feel about these changes?*
4. How would you describe your relationship with your wife/partner/girlfriend before you went on active service?  
*Possible prompts: length of time together? strengths/weaknesses of relationship? plans for the future?*
5. Did your experience/s of active service change your relationship with your wife/ partner /girlfriend in any way?  
*Possible prompts: in what ways? how did/do you feel about these changes?*
6. Has active service changed the way you think or feel about yourself?  
*Possible prompts: do you see yourself differently now than before you experienced active service? in what ways?*
7. How would you describe your relationship/s now?  
*Possible prompts: single/with partner? Strengths/weaknesses of relationship?*
8. How do you think your wife/partner/girlfriend would describe your relationship now? (if in relationship now)  
*Possible prompts: strengths/weaknesses of relationship? plans for the future?*
9. How do you see your relationship/s in the future?  
*Possible prompts: strong/weak? Staying together/parting? why?*
10. Are there any ways in which you think your relationship/s would have been different if you had not seen active service?  
*Possible prompts: in what ways? positive or negative differences?*

The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen  
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**Revised Interview Schedule (260115)**

11. Can you tell me briefly about your military career and your experience of active service?  
*Possible prompts: why did you join? what were your expectations? what did you do to prepare? how did reality compare?*
12. Tell me about your relationship when you went on active service?  
*Length of time together? strengths/weaknesses of relationship/s? plans for the future?*
13. What was it like coming home from active service?  
*Possible prompts: How had you changed? In what ways? How did you/do you feel about these changes? How had people you were in relationship with changed? What changes did you notice in your relationship? how did/do you feel about these changes?*
14. How would you describe your relationship now/your current relationship?
15. How do you think your wife/partner/girlfriend would describe your relationship now? (if in relationship now)  
*Possible prompts: strengths/weaknesses of relationship? plans for the future?*
16. How do you see your relationship/s in the future?  
*Possible prompts: strong/weak? Staying together/parting? why?*
17. Are there any ways in which you think your relationship/s would have been different if you had not seen active service?  
*Possible prompts: in what ways? positive or negative differences?*



The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen  
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Appendix 3: Research Ethics Forms



**New School of  
Psychotherapy and Counselling**

*Director: Prof. Emmy van Deurzen*

Royal Waterloo House  
51-55 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8TX.  
Telephone: 020 7928 4344/0029  
Fax: 020 7401 2231  
Email: admin@nspc.org.uk  
Website: www.nspc.org.uk

Susan Iacovou  
12 Dulwich Close  
Sale  
Cheshire  
M33 4ZP

26 April 2010

Dear Susan

**Research Proposal Resubmission**

Your research proposal has been approved by Chair's action.  
You can now submit your ethics documentation. This is done as part of Research methods 3 module. If you have already taken this module you should contact your research supervisor who will guide you through the ethics process.

Yours sincerely

**Prof Emmy van Deurzen**  
Director NSPC

NSPC is a section of **London City College**. Its postgraduate courses in psychotherapy are validated by the University of Sheffield. Its MSc course in counselling psychology is validated by Middlesex University



NSPC has been Recognised as Efficient by the British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education

**COURSES OFFERED**

- MSc in Existential Counselling Psychology
- MA in Existential Psychotherapy & Counselling
- Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma in Existential Psychotherapy & Counselling
- Diploma in Existential Counselling
- Foundation Course in Psychotherapy & Counselling
- Certificate in Existential Supervision & Training

# The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen

## An Existential-Phenomenological Study



### London City College

Royal Waterloo House,  
51-55 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8TX.  
Telephone: 020 79280029  
Fax: 020 74012231  
e-mail: [admin@nspc.org.uk](mailto:admin@nspc.org.uk)  
website: [www.londoncitycollege.com](http://www.londoncitycollege.com)

Susan Iacovou  
12 Dulwich Close  
Sale  
Cheshire  
M33 4ZP

12 July 2010

Dear Susan

#### Re: Ethics Approval

We held an Ethics Board on 7 July 2010 and the following decision were made.

#### Ethics Approval

Approved with conditions

#### Conditions

- Modify debriefing sheet to show another organisation or person, other than yourself, in the event of untoward consequences
- You should not give your personal contact details, you should use office, in this case it should be Dilemma
- Resubmit revised documents showing amendments

Yours sincerely

*P.P. Shinebourne*

Prof Digby Tantam  
Chair Ethics Committee  
NSPC

Dr Gordon Weller  
Programme Leader DProf (Health)  
Middlesex University



LCC has been Recognised as Efficient  
by the British Accreditation Council  
for Independent Further and Higher  
Education

London City College (LCC) is a section of Schiller International University

#### COURSES OFFERED

- Master of Business Administration (MBA)
- Bachelor in Business Administration (BBA)
- Marketing Management
- Hotel & Catering
- English Language
- Psychotherapy and Counselling
- Business Administration
- International Business Studies
- Travel & Tourism
- Exporting/Importing
- Hotel and Catering
- Shipping & Transport
- Information Technology

The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen  
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**Appendix 4: Ethics Revisions for SKYPE interviews**

**Student Name:** Susan Iacovou  
**Student Number:** M00  
**Research Title:** The impact of active service on the intimate relationships of ex-servicemen: an existential-phenomenological study.  
**Award:** Doctorate in Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy

**Modification Requested:** Use of SKYPE to conduct some of my research interviews.

**Rationale for Modification:** My research uses IPA, which requires a 'fairly homogenous sample' (Smith, et al, 2009, p49). The pool of research participants I have identified - ex Naval servicemen who saw active service in the Falklands' Conflict - is therefore relatively small. I have a number of face to face interviews set up but some participants have come forward from the US and Europe and have requested that we meet by SKYPE. I am asking for a modification of my original ethical approval to enable me to include these interviews/participants in my research sample.

**Key Issues with SKYPE Interviews:** In making this request I have taken full cognizance of the BPS Ethics Guidelines for Internet Mediated Research (BPS, 2013). The authors of these guidelines acknowledge that the internet and its associated technologies increase the opportunities for psychological research but also point out that such technology potentially '*restricts the researcher's capacity, in contexts where a participant is actively aware of and knowingly participating in a study ....to monitor, support or even terminate the study if adverse reactions become apparent*' (BPS, 2013 p3). The guidelines further identify a number of potential risks for such research. I have addressed those relevant to SKYPE interviews in the paragraphs below and have outlined how I will address each issue.

**Confidentiality**

My priority will be to minimize levels of risk to the confidentiality of participants' data. This is complicated in SKYPE interviews due to fact that they are effectively conducted privately (between two individuals) and publicly (by virtue of being internet mediated). I will address the issues raised by agreeing in advance with the participants that participant and researcher will be the only individuals present in the process. Both individuals will use private rooms and there will be no use of the messaging or chat function on SKYPE during the interviews. SKYPE itself uses the AES ([Advanced Encryption Standard\\*](#)), which is used by the US Government to protect sensitive information, and Skype also uses strong 256-bit encryption. My computer is protected by the latest security updates for the Mac and I use a personal firewall. The limits of confidentiality and privacy will be included in the revised participants' brief. I will also include suggestions for participants to help increase the privacy and security at their end.

# The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen

## An Existential-Phenomenological Study

### **Verifying Identity/Getting valid consent**

The identity of the participants will be verified through their membership of the relevant interest groups through which recruitment has taken place and through their online presence, previous email correspondence and addresses and SYPE usernames and identities. Participants will receive a detailed Participant Information Sheet by email, which they will be asked to read carefully, following which they will be sent a consent form (also by email). The participants will be asked to consider the consent form and sign it if appropriate, returning it to the researcher by email in advance of the session. Consent will then be confirmed at the start of the interview.

### **Withdrawal**

The researcher will ensure there are robust procedures to allow the participants to withdraw at each stage of the process – following receipt of the Participant Information Sheet, prior to any arranged interview, during the interview and up to one month after the interview. At the start of the interview on SKYPE, and at a mid point during the interview, participants will be asked if they are happy to continue. At the end of the interview, as part of the debriefing process, participants will be reminded of their right to withdraw at any time up to one month following the interview. Two weeks after the interview, participants will be contacted by email and reminded of their right to withdraw up to one month post interview.

### **Minimizing Harm**

To ensure I am able to take any necessary action should an emergency situation arise during the interview, I will ask for the participants' physical location and will identify the emergency services' number/s for that location in advance of our discussions. A comprehensive Participant Information Sheet and debriefing process (with accompanying Debriefing Information Sheet) will ensure participants are protected from harm as much as possible.

### **Lack of Control**

The use of SKYPE interviews makes it more difficult to control the participant's environmental conditions. The Participant Information Sheet will invite the participant to identify a private, comfortable space where they won't be interrupted and where they are able to concentrate on the discussions between themselves and the researcher.

Finally, although not explicitly mentioned in the BPS guidelines, it is important to acknowledge two other potential issues:

# The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen

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### **Technological problems**

The speed of both researcher and participants' internet connections may affect the quality of the connection. Time lags and freezes may disrupt the interview process and may even result in it being temporarily halted. There is a limit to how much this can be managed in advance. However, a test call between the researcher and the participant will allow for testing of the connection and for initial establishment of rapport between the two parties. Recording will be through a Dictaphone selected and tested on the basis of its ability to pick up conversations in this format. This has been selected in preference to recording software designed to work alongside SKYPE as such software does not allow for easy transcribing and is generally seen to have poor sound quality.

### **Establishing Rapport**

The synchronous, face-to-face nature of SKYPE conversations means that the same semi-structured interview questions can be asked and the same depth and breadth of issues addressed using this medium, as could be in face to face interviews. Participants will be asked to ensure they are visible on the camera (head shot only or waist up, as preferred) to ensure that the researcher has access to facial and body language cues. The researcher will also take steps to ensure the participant has a similar view of the researcher. Visual and verbal cues will thus be available to both participants, as they would be in an interview in which both were in the same room. Finally, as a reflexive researcher, I will reflect throughout and after the interviews carried out in this medium on the impact it has on both participant and researcher and on the data gathered. Deakin and Wakefield (2014) maintain that rapport can be established in SKYPE interviews in a similar way to that established in co-present interviews. I am confident that the skills I have developed, as a reflexive practitioner, will allow me to establish and build rapport during SKYPE based research interviews.

### **References**

**British Psychological Society** (2013). *Ethics Guidelines for Internet-mediated Research*. INF206/1.2013. Leicester: Author. Available from: [www.bps.org.uk/publications/policy-and-guidelines/research-guidelines-policy-documents/research-guidelines-poli](http://www.bps.org.uk/publications/policy-and-guidelines/research-guidelines-policy-documents/research-guidelines-poli)

**Deaken, H., & Wakefield, K.** (2013) Skype Interviewing: reflections of two PhD researchers. *Qualitative Research*, Vol 14, Issue 5, P603-615

**Smith, J.A., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M.** (2009) *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*. London, Sage



**Information about a research project - The impact  
of active service on the intimate relationships of**



The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen  
An Existential-Phenomenological Study

**ex-servicemen – being carried out by Susan Iacovou as a requirement for a  
Doctorate in Counselling Psychology from NSPC and Middlesex University**

**How do ex-servicemen describe the impact of active service on  
their intimate relationships?**

**1. An Invitation**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Feel free to ask me, or my academic supervisor, if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information, you will find our contact details at the end of this document.

Thank you for reading this.

**2. What is the Purpose of the Study?**

The aim of this study is to look at the ways in which ex-servicemen describe and explain the impact of active service on their intimate relationships. (Intimate relationships are those involving romantic/sexual partners, such as girlfriends, boyfriends, fiancés, fiancées, wives and husbands.) The study will explore if, and how, participants' ways of making sense of life, and their values, beliefs and behaviours, are changed by their experiences of active service, and if, or how, these changes have affected their relationships.

The study will take place between January 2015 and September 2015.

# The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen

## An Existential-Phenomenological Study

### 3. Why Have You Been Chosen?

Perhaps you have responded to a request made to one of the ex-service associations, have seen my request for participants on a social media site, or have been told about the study by a friend or colleague. You are invited to take part if you have:

- d) served in the British military
- e) experienced at least one month of active service either as a combatant or peace-keeper
- f) had at least one intimate relationship during or after this period of active service

A total of 6-8 participants in total will take part in the study. This is a relatively small number because I want to hear about individuals' unique experiences in depth.

### 3. Do You Have to Take Part?

Taking part in this research study is **entirely voluntary**. It is up to you to decide whether or not to go ahead and take part. If you do decide to go ahead, you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will be asked to sign a consent form. Even if you decide to take part, you can choose not to answer a particular question/s and will still be free to withdraw at any time during the interview (and up to one month afterwards), without giving a reason.

No one will be told of your decision to withdraw and this decision will not affect your right to access further support services offered to participants (see Section 6 below).

# The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen

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### **4. What Will Happen If You Take Part?**

You will be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview. This means you will meet with me in private, either face to face or on SKYPE, and you will be asked to answer some open-ended questions about your experiences and perceptions. This interview will typically last between an hour and ninety minutes, but could take up to two hours. You will be asked to answer openly and will be given time to reflect and consider your responses. The conversation will be recorded digitally for later transcription and analysis (and I therefore ask your permission to do this). The questions will concentrate on whether or not your experience of active service impacts/has impacted on your intimate relationships and if so, in what ways. We will reflect on your lived experiences and what they mean for you (there are therefore no right and wrong answers, as my focus will be on understanding your unique way of looking at your experiences). This kind of reflection can on occasion evoke strong emotions. Care will be taken to make sure that you are not unduly upset and I will check-in with you regularly during the session to see if you wish to continue.

The data from your interview will be analysed and key themes identified and eventually merged with the key themes that come from the other participants' interviews. I will transcribe the discussions myself. The recording and the transcript will be kept in a safe place (i.e. in a password protected local folder on my personal computer) so that your anonymity can be protected.

### **5. What are the Possible Disadvantages and Risks of Taking Part?**

Occasionally, talking about past experiences may be thought-provoking or distressing or may even cause people to re-experience difficult emotions or traumas. It is possible that talking about your experience of active service and its impact on your relationships may be upsetting and may make you feel anxious or depressed. You will have the option to withdraw from the study at any time before, during or up to one month after the interview. In addition, should you want it, I can provide you with the contact details of relevant support agencies that work with ex-servicemen and women. These agencies may be able



## The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen An Existential-Phenomenological Study

to provide you with a counsellor who will be able to help you to process your thoughts and emotions and can help you to access further sources of psychological support should they be needed. If you are taking part in the research via SKYPE I will ask you to confirm your physical location in advance so that should an emergency situation arise during our discussions I am able to contact the emergency services on your behalf.

### **6. What are the Possible Benefits of Taking Part?**

Many people find taking part in research of this nature interesting and rewarding. It is possible that talking about your experience of active service and its impact on your relationships will help you make sense of parts of your life or ways you behave. We certainly hope that participating in the study will help you in this way. However, this cannot be guaranteed. The information we get from this study may help us to guide people who provide services to ex-servicemen and women, and this may in turn help other people who have had similar experiences.

### **7. Will My Taking Part Be Kept Confidential?**

All information collected during this study will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored, analysed and reported in compliance with the United Kingdom's Data Protection Legislation. Following publication of the research, recorded information and notes will be destroyed. You will not be identified by name (but rather by a unique code, known only to the researchers) and any information likely to identify you (name, background, branch of service, etc.) will be left out. The only people who will have access to the information collected during the study other than myself will be my research supervisor and the examiners who assess my report as part of my doctoral studies. You will be asked to remember your duties under the Official Secrets' Act, and will be reminded not to reveal any information covered by this Act during the course of the research. Please note that interviews by SKYPE do rely on the privacy and security settings of both interviewer and research participant. If you are taking part in the research via SKYPE, you are asked to ensure you have an appropriate firewall on your

## The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen An Existential-Phenomenological Study

computer and to ensure your SKYPE settings are set to a privacy level with which you are comfortable. You will also need to ensure you are situated in a private room, where you cannot be overheard and where our discussions will not be interrupted. SKYPE itself uses the AES ([Advanced Encryption Standard\\*](#)), which is used by the US Government to protect sensitive information, and Skype also uses strong 256-bit encryption.

### **8. What Will Happen to the Results of the Research?**

The results of this research will make up a dissertation report, which will be published (towards the end of 2015) as part of my Doctoral Studies in Existential Counselling and Psychotherapy. Brief excerpts from each interview are likely to be included in the report, as illustrations of the key themes that have emerged, but these excerpts will in no way identify you. I may also ask your permission to include a more substantial part of our discussions in an appendix to the report, again with all identifying information removed. It is likely that shorter research papers will be produced from the report and published in relevant academic journals. It is also possible that the research findings will form the basis of newspaper or magazine reports, given the relevant and current nature of the subject under study. In none of these publications will you be identified either directly or indirectly.

The final dissertation will be kept in the library at the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling. As previously highlighted, it will contain no information that might in any way identify you.

### **9. Who Has Reviewed the Study?**

This study has been reviewed and given ethical approval by the Middlesex University, School of Health and Social Sciences, Health Studies Ethics sub-committee and will be carried out in accordance with the ethical code of the British Psychological Society. I would be happy to provide you with a copy of this ethical code and to answer any questions you may have about it.

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**10. Who Do I Contact for Further Information?**

For further information, please contact me:

Susan Iacovou

New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling

51-55 Waterloo Road

London SE1 8TX

Tel: 07787 131 353

Email: [susan@iacovou.co.uk](mailto:susan@iacovou.co.uk)

Or my academic supervisor:

Chloe Paidoussis-Mitchell

New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling

61-63 Fortune Green Road

London

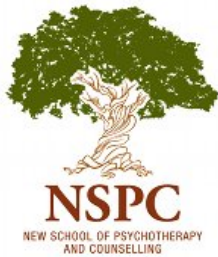
NW6 1DR

Tel: 845 557 7752

Email: [chloe\\_paidoussis@hotmail.com](mailto:chloe_paidoussis@hotmail.com)

Thank you for reading this information sheet and agreeing to consider taking part in this study. If you decide to go ahead and participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You will be given a copy of this sheet, and of the consent form, to keep.

The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen  
An Existential-Phenomenological Study



**Information about a research project - The impact of active service on the intimate relationships of ex-servicemen – being carried out by Susan Iacovou as a requirement for a Doctorate in Counselling Psychology from NSPC and Middlesex University**



**New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling  
Middlesex University**

**Participant ID number: 001501**

**Title of project:** How do ex-servicemen describe the impact of active service on their intimate relationships?

**Name of researcher:** Susan Iacovou

I have understood the details of the research as explained to me by the researcher, have read the Information for Participants sheet (which I may keep for my records), and hereby confirm that I have consented to act as a participant. I have had the chance to ask questions about the research and any questions I have raised have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, the data collected during the research will not be identifiable, and I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time before or during, and up to one month after, the interview, without any obligation to explain my reasons for doing so.

I further understand that the data I provide may be used for analysis and subsequent publication in an anonymous form, and provide my consent that this might occur.

I understand that a digital audio recording is being made of this interview and that the interview will form part of a research dissertation, which will be subject to examination for completion by the researcher of the Doctorate in Counselling Psychology. Interviews and transcripts will be available to the academic supervisor and the examiners until the examination is completed. They will then be securely stored for one calendar year before being destroyed.

I understand that if I am taking part in this research via SKYPE interview, it is my responsibility to ensure that I have a private interview space in which to meet with the interviewer and to ensure that I am comfortable with the privacy settings on my SKYPE account and on my computer.

Finally, I understand that the research involves me talking about my own experiences of active service and intimate relationships and may evoke a range of emotions in me. I acknowledge my responsibility to limit my disclosure to that which I am comfortable with. The researcher (Susan) will make sure I am as comfortable as possible before, during and after the interview and will provide

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me with details of relevant support agencies who can provide me with counselling and other support should it be needed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant                      Date                      Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher                      Date                      Signature

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**Appendix 5: Participants' documentation: briefing sheet/debriefing  
sheet/consent form**



**Information about a research project - The impact  
of active service on the intimate relationships of  
ex-servicemen – being carried out by Susan Iacovou  
as a requirement for a Doctorate in Counselling Psychology from  
NSPC and Middlesex University**



**New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling  
Middlesex University**

**Participant ID number: 001501**

**Title of project:** How do ex-servicemen describe the impact of active service on their intimate relationships?

**Name of researcher:** Susan Iacovou

I have understood the details of the research as explained to me by the researcher, have read the Information for Participants sheet (which I may keep for my records), and hereby confirm that I have consented to act as a participant. I have had the chance to ask questions about the research and any questions I have raised have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, the data collected during the research will not be identifiable, and I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time before or during, and up to one month after, the interview, without any obligation to explain my reasons for doing so.

I further understand that the data I provide may be used for analysis and subsequent publication in an anonymous form, and provide my consent that this might occur.

I understand that a digital audio recording is being made of this interview and that the interview will form part of a research dissertation, which will be subject to examination for completion by the researcher of the Doctorate in Counselling Psychology. Interviews and transcripts will be available to the academic supervisor and the examiners until the examination is completed. They will then be securely stored for one calendar year before being destroyed.

Finally, I understand that the research involves me talking about my own experiences of active service and intimate relationships and may evoke a range

The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen  
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of emotions in me. I acknowledge my responsibility to limit my disclosure to that which I am comfortable with. The researcher (Susan) will make sure I am as comfortable as possible before, during and after the interview and will provide me with details of relevant support agencies who can provide me with counselling and other support should it be needed.

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant	Date	Signature

_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------

Researcher

# The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen

## An Existential-Phenomenological Study



**Information about a research project - The impact of active service on the intimate relationships of ex-servicemen – being carried out by Susan Iacovou as a requirement for a Doctorate in Counselling Psychology from NSPC and Middlesex University.**

Susan Iacovou Doctoral Research  
New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling  
Middlesex University.

### **How do ex-servicemen describe the impact of active service on their intimate relationships?**

Many thanks for taking part in this research. After the interview you will have had time to raise anything that has come up for you in the light of our discussions.

You will also be contacted (unless you say otherwise) by me, two weeks post interview to make sure that nothing further has arisen as a result of our meeting that has caused you any concern.

If after you leave the interview, you feel troubled by what you have shared, please don't hesitate to contact me (please see the contact details below). Alternatively, you may prefer to contact one of the following organisations:

- Combat Stress: 0800 138 1619 (or <http://www.combatstress.org.uk/veterans/contact-us/>)
- The Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen Family Association confidential helpline: 0800 731 4880 (or to send a confidential email: <https://www.ssafa.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/forcesline-email-enquiry/>)

In addition, organisations for accredited counsellors/psychologists have useful websites where you can access information about privately provided support available in your area.

- The British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy: <http://www.bacp.co.uk>
- The UK Council for Psychotherapy: <http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk>
- The British Psychological Society: <http://www.bps.org.uk/psychology-public/find-psychologist/find-psychologist>

Thank you again for helping with this research.



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If you have any further questions please contact me or my Academic Supervisor – Chloe Paidoussis) – directly via the email/telephone numbers over the page.

**Contact Details:**

Susan Iacovou

Tel: 07787 131 253

Email: [susan@iacovou.co.uk](mailto:susan@iacovou.co.uk)

Chloe Paidoussis

Email: [chloe\\_paidoussis@hotmail.com](mailto:chloe_paidoussis@hotmail.com)

# The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen

## An Existential-Phenomenological Study



**Information about a research project - The impact of active service on the intimate relationships of ex-servicemen – being carried out by Susan Iacovou**

**as a requirement for a Doctorate in Counselling Psychology from NSPC and Middlesex University**



### **How do ex-servicemen describe the impact of active service on their intimate relationships?**

#### **11. An Invitation**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Feel free to ask me, or my academic supervisor, if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information, you will find our contact details at the end of this document.

Thank you for reading this.

#### **12. What is the Purpose of the Study?**

The aim of this study is to look at the ways in which ex-servicemen describe and explain the impact of active service on their intimate relationships. (Intimate relationships are those involving romantic/sexual partners, such as girlfriends, boyfriends, fiancés, fiancées, wives and husbands.) The study will explore if, and how, participants' ways of making sense of life, and their values, beliefs and behaviours, are changed by their experiences of active service, and if, or how, these changes have affected their relationships.

The study will take place between January 2015 and September 2015.

# The Impact of Active Service on the Intimate Relationships of Ex-Servicemen

## An Existential-Phenomenological Study

### 3. Why Have You Been Chosen?

Perhaps you have responded to a request made to one of the ex-service associations, have seen my request for participants on a social media site, or have been told about the study by a friend or colleague. You are invited to take part if you have:

- g) served in the British military
- h) experienced at least one month of active service either as a combatant or peace-keeper
- i) had at least one intimate relationship during or after this period of active service

A total of 6-8 participants in total will take part in the study. This is a relatively small number because I want to hear about individuals' unique experiences in depth.

### 13. Do You Have to Take Part?

Taking part in this research study is **entirely voluntary**. It is up to you to decide whether or not to go ahead and take part. If you do decide to go ahead, you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will be asked to sign a consent form. Even if you decide to take part, you can choose not to answer a particular question/s and will still be free to withdraw at any time during the interview (and up to one month afterwards), without giving a reason.

No one will be told of your decision to withdraw and this decision will not affect your right to access further support services offered to participants (see Section 6 below).

**14. What Will Happen If You Take Part?**

You will be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview. This means you will meet with me in private, either face to face or on SKYPE, and you will be asked to answer some open-ended questions about your experiences and perceptions. This interview will typically last between an hour and ninety minutes, but could take up to two hours. You will be asked to answer openly and will be given time to reflect and consider your responses. The conversation will be recorded digitally for later transcription and analysis (and I therefore ask your permission to do this). The questions will concentrate on whether or not your experience of active service impacts/has impacted on your intimate relationships and if so, in what ways. We will reflect on your lived experiences and what they mean for you (there are therefore no right and wrong answers, as my focus will be on understanding your unique way of looking at your experiences). This kind of reflection can on occasion evoke strong emotions. Care will be taken to make sure that you are not unduly upset and I will check-in with you regularly during the session to see if you wish to continue.

The data from your interview will be analysed and key themes identified and eventually merged with the key themes that come from the other participants' interviews. I will transcribe the discussions myself. The recording and the transcript will be kept in a safe place (i.e. in a password protected local folder on my personal computer) so that your anonymity can be protected.

**15. What are the Possible Disadvantages and Risks of Taking Part?**

Occasionally, talking about past experiences may be thought-provoking or distressing or may even cause people to re-experience difficult emotions or traumas. It is possible that talking about your experience of active service and its impact on your relationships may be upsetting and may make you feel anxious or depressed. You will have the option to withdraw from the study at any time before, during or up to one month after the interview. In addition, should you want it, I can provide you with the contact details of relevant support agencies that work with ex-servicemen and women. These agencies may be able

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to provide you with a counsellor who will be able to help you to process your thoughts and emotions and can help you to access further sources of psychological support should they be needed. If you are taking part in the research via SKYPE I will ask you to confirm your physical location in advance so that should an emergency situation arise during our discussions I am able to contact the emergency services on your behalf.

#### **16. What are the Possible Benefits of Taking Part?**

Many people find taking part in research of this nature interesting and rewarding. It is possible that talking about your experience of active service and its impact on your relationships will help you make sense of parts of your life or ways you behave. We certainly hope that participating in the study will help you in this way. However, this cannot be guaranteed. The information we get from this study may help us to guide people who provide services to ex-servicemen and women, and this may in turn help other people who have had similar experiences.

#### **17. Will My Taking Part Be Kept Confidential?**

All information collected during this study will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored, analysed and reported in compliance with the United Kingdom's Data Protection Legislation. Following publication of the research, recorded information and notes will be destroyed. You will not be identified by name (but rather by a unique code, known only to the researchers) and any information likely to identify you (name, background, branch of service, etc.) will be left out. The only people who will have access to the information collected during the study other than myself will be my research supervisor and the examiners who assess my report as part of my doctoral studies. You will be asked to remember your duties under the Official Secrets' Act, and will be reminded not to reveal any information covered by this Act during the course of the research. Please note that interviews by SKYPE do rely on the privacy and security settings of both interviewer and research participant. If you are taking part in the research via SKYPE, you are asked to ensure you have an appropriate firewall on your

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computer and to ensure your SKYPE settings are set to a privacy level with which you are comfortable. You will also need to ensure you are situated in a private room, where you cannot be overheard and where our discussions will not be interrupted. SKYPE itself uses the AES ([Advanced Encryption Standard\\*](#)), which is used by the US Government to protect sensitive information, and Skype also uses strong 256-bit encryption.

#### **18. What Will Happen to the Results of the Research?**

The results of this research will make up a dissertation report, which will be published (towards the end of 2015) as part of my Doctoral Studies in Existential Counselling and Psychotherapy. Brief excerpts from each interview are likely to be included in the report, as illustrations of the key themes that have emerged, but these excerpts will in no way identify you. I may also ask your permission to include a more substantial part of our discussions in an appendix to the report, again with all identifying information removed. It is likely that shorter research papers will be produced from the report and published in relevant academic journals. It is also possible that the research findings will form the basis of newspaper or magazine reports, given the relevant and current nature of the subject under study. In none of these publications will you be identified either directly or indirectly.

The final dissertation will be kept in the library at the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling. As previously highlighted, it will contain no information that might in any way identify you.

#### **19. Who Has Reviewed the Study?**

This study has been reviewed and given ethical approval by the Middlesex University, School of Health and Social Sciences, Health Studies Ethics sub-committee and will be carried out in accordance with the ethical code of the British Psychological Society. I would be happy to provide you with a copy of this ethical code and to answer any questions you may have about it.

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**20. Who Do I Contact for Further Information?**

For further information, please contact me:

Susan Iacovou

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London SE1 8TX

Tel: 07787 131 353

Email: [susan@iacovou.co.uk](mailto:susan@iacovou.co.uk)

Or my academic supervisor:

Chloe Paidoussis-Mitchell

New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling

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London

NW6 1DR

Tel: 845 557 7752

Email: [chloe\\_paidoussis@hotmail.com](mailto:chloe_paidoussis@hotmail.com)

Thank you for reading this information sheet and agreeing to consider taking part in this study. If you decide to go ahead and participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You will be given a copy of this sheet, and of the consent form, to keep.

## Appendix 6: James' Transcript



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Emergent Themes		Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments
	1.	R: Thank you for coming along ..	
	2.	J: No problem Sue	
	3.	R: I really appreciate it, as I indicated, can you kick off by telling me a bit about your military career, any experience of active service..	
	4.	J: Yep	
	5.	R: Because I know nothing about it whatsoever really	
Desire to be understood.  Motivations unclear.  Sense about choice.	6.	J: Okay, em, my name's James Ferguson, eh, I'm now 51 years of age, I em, was a Sea Cadet in Oldingham from the age of 14, through to 16, em, that was the motivat...one of the <u>motivators</u> to join the Navy at 16...	Starts before joining the Navy. Why he joined the Navy. Important for me to know this? Does he want me to see his choices/ his life in context? Does he want it to make sense to me? To be understood.
	7.	R: Oh right...	
Seeking a sense of direction.  Knowing where he was going reduced his anxiety about the future.  Making big decisions about his future at a very young age	8.	J: Yep, eh, by the age of, before I'd left school I'd <u>actually signed</u> all the papers to join the Navy, so eh, I knew that, em, leaving school in April I knew where I was going in October, em, having had the papers back from the careers office and everything else (right) so, em, while other people were still wondering what they were going to do probably I'd already, sort of, <u>signed my destiny</u> (okay) eh, at an early age...to join the	Life as a journey – important to know where you are going next before you leave? Knew his destination, next step, when others didn't. Certainty. Determination? Something to be admired? Not just a job? Destiny – fate – karma? But with an element of choice. At an early age – is he saying he was young to be deciding/to have decided his fate?

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Too young to really understand his motivations to join the Navy		Navy	
	9.	R. And what had, I mean obviously, Sea Cadets were there, but what had directed you to....	
<p>The importance of being authentic and open with others.</p> <p>Loss of his brother resulted in a fracture in his worldview. He felt lost and adrift.</p> <p>The Navy offered the potential for meaning.</p> <p>The Navy offered him the potential to belong.</p> <p>The Navy offered the possibility of a defence against death in some way – being remembered as part of history.</p>	10.	<p>J: Em....eh...I think there was a lot of factors if I'm honest, eh...Sue. Em...one of them was, em, I now know probably one of the <u>driving factors</u> was at, eh 13, eh, I lost my step brother (right), eh and he was probably, well he, <u>to that point in my life</u>, was my, sort of best friend, em, he'd got a great granddad and a granddad that we spent a lot of time with as young lads, em, one, em, his great granddad had been in the first world war, his granddad had been in the Atlantic Convoys, eh, and one of my lasting memories is looking at, obviously, the medals, the photos from his granddad, things like that. Eh, once I lost my step brother I, eh, <u>lost probably a lot of direction</u>, eh, and just became a really angry young man (right) and <u>wanted to get away</u> from, eh, my family, Oldingham and everything else (right). So that probably help...was another defining factor as to why I</p>	<p>Loss of his brother and 'best friend'. Less certain (use of pauses and fillers like em, eh) – needed to consider his answer. I felt it was a painful subject for him to discuss.</p> <p>Driving factors – sense of being pushed from behind? Things from previous to him joining the Navy leading up to him joining? Is he putting it in context, making meaning from it?</p> <p>Honesty – facing up to truth, convincing me of truth? Honest with your emotions? Is a key value for John being able to be honest emotionally? I sense this feels new to him but also precious.</p> <p>Family members from the past in the Navy. Difference between what he knew at the time and what he knows now. New insights.</p> <p>He describes points on his life line almost? With events or actions as key points on them? A journey?</p> <p>Loss of his stepbrother resulted in loss of direction. Changed who he was – 'he 'became a really angry young man'. Sense of events changing who you are.</p>

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<p>Fighting to escape the family in which he feels trapped.</p> <p>The Navy offered freedom.</p>		<p>joined the Navy as well.</p>	<p>Lasting memories of photographs, medals.</p> <p>Escape from everything – he wanted to get away. To leave things behind?</p>
	11.	R: Okay, tell me a bit more about that....	
<p>He got the message that emotions were not acceptable.</p> <p>The absurdity of his family's response to death was clear to him.</p> <p>Not being allowed to express his emotions made him want to explode with anger.</p> <p>He used anger as a means to be heard.</p>	12.	<p>J: Em....I think that it was...well I do know it was around the fact that, em, when I lost my stepbrother at 13, he was 16, em, I never went to the funeral, I couldn't tell you where he is buried to this day, I wasn't allowed to go (right), everything just had to carry on as <u>normal</u> for me, em, and I knew it wasn't <u>normal</u>, eh, I fell out with my stepdad, em, and then over the years, whilst I <u>carried on as normal there was more facets of anger</u>, where I just got absolutely, I'd wind myself up, em, I'd got a mental picture of what my biological father was like, that was always the grass is greener sort of thing (mmm, mmm) and it was at that time that em, in one of the</p>	<p>He never went to the funeral. Not allowed to grieve – normality had to continue despite the loss. He new it wasn't normal it seems. He had to pretend everything was normal – dissonance?</p> <p>What's it like not to know where his brother is buried?</p> <p>Anger at being kept out of things.</p> <p>His anger came from not being able to go the funeral, having to continue as normal?</p> <p>Family arguments.</p> <p>Anger...winding himself up (like a spring? Like a clock? Like a timer?. You wind something up so it can go....</p> <p>Found out his mother was never married to his biological father.</p> <p>Dreams of different father...grass is greener – 'better' father somewhere out there? One who is more normal?</p>

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<p>He used anger as a way of trying to blast through the façade of normality presented by his parents.</p> <p>Family life was unsafe and uncertain.</p> <p>He didn't have a solid sense of who he was.</p> <p>He was an outsider in his family – he didn't belong.</p> <p>What you do/experience defines what happens to you and who you become.</p>		<p>bits where I was getting angry, having a go at my mum, she actually <u>dropped the bombshell</u> that she'd never been married to my dad, so that was another bit that I'd not expected in my, if you like, fantasy world.</p> <p>(Okay) And then I think the defining bit was probably when I'd, em, grabbed my mum by the throat and, em, basically put the carving knife at the side of her head, left it in the door, em, walked away <u>telling her never to wind me up</u> again.</p>	<p>'Bombshell' – explosion, shock, out of the blue, imposed on him, totally unexpected. Military metaphor creating images of destruction, craters/holes in what was previously solid ground.</p> <p>Fantasy – dreams of it being different. (grass is greener – reminded me of sound of music and the pasture in the Swiss Alps). Dreams of his family life being different.</p> <p>Defining bit – a key point in his story. Sent him in a direction he might not have gone in otherwise.</p> <p>Feels like something that put the seal on things. Made leaving unavoidable?</p> <p>Wound up. Others wind me up. Warning, don't wind me up or I will ...? Explode, cause damage and destruction?</p>
	13.	R: Okay. One of the questions I had in my mind to ask you was what you meant by angry, because, people mean different things by angry, but you've given some examples...	
	14.	J: Yeh. Eh, and I knew that ...probably the	Stepdad disapproval. Mum and stepdad together

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He wasn't approved of by his parents.		other bit was, whilst doing that, it was probably an <u>instigator</u> for a <u>fall out</u> with my step dad as well because I knew eh, he wouldn't be best pleased with my actions with my mum (right).	against him? Fall out....stepping outside, removing self (fall out in army terms). Again a sense of ending, inevitability, finality, leaving. Understands things in terms of cause and effect – 'another instigator'. Actions have consequences – cause and effect. Emotional outbursts damage relationships? His actions meant his dad would be displeased.
	15.	R: And how does this link in with you joining the Navy, time wise and.....	
<p>Wanting to belong/be part of something.</p> <p>Gaining a sense of who he was through Sea Cadets.</p> <p>Sea Cadets gave him the opportunity to experience freedom and independence.</p> <p>Sea Cadets gave him a sense of efficacy.</p> <p>His achievements in the Sea Cadets gave him a</p>	16.	J: It was probably 18, yeh, probably 18 months before, before I joined the Navy, em, I'd got myself into, em, there was a small group of us that joined the Sea Cadets, we'd meet up, we also went to school together, there were about 4 or 5 of us, em, so on a Tuesday and a Thursday night, em, <u>I fell into</u> the Sea Cadets more than went out looking for it, my mates were doing it so I thought I'd go and do that (okay) em, but I actually, suddenly found that I actually liked it and I was fairly good at it, em, I'd been in the Oldingham band so I quickly became a member of the Sea Cadet band and...a bugler, em, I think I was 15 at the time, maybe a little bit younger and I wanted to be an engineer in the Sea Cadets so I had to <u>go</u>	<p>Taken charge of his direction 'got himself into' Joined the sea cadets.</p> <p>Fell into the sea cadets, joining something, stepping into it (got myself into). New group or family to be part of? Fell into – by chance? Wasn't looking for it? Became a member of something.</p> <p>His mates were doing it – wanted to be part of the group of friends?</p> <p>Packing, leaving, moving on, adventure, daring? All sounds very independent. No mention of his family helping him pack, for example.</p>

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sense of pride.		<u>away down</u> to Portsmouth for 2 weeks, which was basically, em leaving...the Navy sent a warrant and as a 14 and a half, 15 year old, I had to put my warrant in at Oldingham station, pack me bag, go down to Portsmouth, across London, get myself to.....	
	17.	R: What was that like, tell me?	
<p>He was excited about the possibilities the Sea Cadets offered him</p> <p>He was desperate to escape his situation</p> <p>The Navy gave him a sense of direction</p> <p>He needed to be somewhere different</p>	18.	<p>J: Well if I'm <u>honest</u> Sue it was a great <u>adventure</u> (yeah?). You know, em, my mum and dad were like 'I'm not sure we should let him go' and everything else and I was like '<u>No, No, I need to go</u>'. But it was a great adventure and I can remember, that was my first experience of the Underground and everything else and I sort of, em it was the days when the Navy guys would put their cap on the outside of their bags (right) so I'd spotted one of them and I was like 'right, whatever happens <u>I'm going to follow that</u>' (both laugh) because the chances are it's going to take me to Waterloo and that's <u>where I need to be</u>. So I was like, I'll follow that....</p>	<p>Going to Sea Cadet training in Portsmouth. Adventure. 'If I'm honest...' does he feel he should have been upset to be leaving home? Is he trying to explain his focus on it being an adventure? He had to pull away from his mum and dad? Wanted to separate from them?</p> <p>Need to go – essential, vital</p> <p>Adventure and independence.</p> <p>Following others in the Navy. Desire to be in the same group/club? 'That's where I needed to be'. Navy as parent he could follow? Giving him a sense of direction - showing him where he needed to be?</p>
	19.	R: You said you 'had to go' and I was interested in your use of that.....	
Wanting to be special, to stand out from the crowd	20.	J: Yeah, because, because it was just something I felt was important to me, em, to,	Part of his ego? Desire to be special? To stand out?

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He was proud to be different from those around him		em and probably part of it was a <u>little bit of ego</u> because there was no other engineer Sea Cadets basically, once I passed that I became a Cadet Petty Officer (right) <u>and nobody</u> in Oldingham <u>had ever</u> become a Cadet Petty Officer for marine engineering	To be the first/the only one? To become something/someone...find himself? Find out who he was/influence who he was in eyes of others?
	21.	R: Okay, and that was important to you?	
Seeking to 'exist' in the eyes of others  Wanting to show other people he was special	22.	J: Yeah, probably it was the bit that <u>set me apart</u> and, I probably, I, eh could, I'd captained the football team, I'd captained the rowing team, we'd been quite successful, I was one of the key, em, <u>drivers</u> in the Sea Cadets and so that was again one of the key opportunities really to <u>stamp my mark</u> on it.	Being set apart, being different, being in front. Being a leader. Succeeding. Being key in a team/group.  Stamping his mark – being noticed, influencing something. Why does he need to stamp his mark? Does he feel unnoticed/unimportant? Is it about leaving something behind – a mark on it? Is the stamping of the mark a seal of approval/achievement?
	23.	R: Okay.....that's an interesting phrase..stamp your mark, is that something....it sounds like something that was...	
He was trying to get a more solid sense of who he was  He was seeking to establish his own values and worldview	24.	J: Em, I think it was something that was....just to establish <u>a little bit of who I am, what am I about</u> (mmm), <u>if that</u> , em...	Sense of who I am, what matters to me established. Individuality, self-worth? He was slightly sheepish here. I had a sense he was seeking approval for wanting to find out who he was.

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	25.	R: Establish for...	
<p>He felt disengaged from everything around him</p> <p>Being in Sea Cadets helped him to begin to determine his own worth and value</p> <p>He was part of something bigger in the Sea Cadets</p> <p>He felt a sense of belonging in the Sea Cadets</p>	26.	<p>J: For me more than anything, em, I was at a point where, you know, ironically I was looking at some school reports and the common theme towards the end was eh, <u>a casual air of indifference</u>, eh, (right), which is about right, I didn't really care about anything else, <u>but I did care about what I thought about me, if that...</u>, and eh..... So being in the sea cadets, being a key part of Sea Cadets, em was something I took a lot of <u>pride</u> in, em, I think at the time there was a lot, well, one of the things that I did, that probably gave me most pride, eh, I was either, I was either fifteen or, yeah I would be 15, was when em, playing the last post in The Crooked Spire (right). Em, and <u>marching down</u>, eh, I had to march the main passage way of The Crooked Spire, go into the pulpit, all the lights were off, eh, and I played the last post, eh...</p>	<p>Apathy, didn't care, withdrawal – appearance of not giving a damn but was this the reality? Journey to find yourself? Cared about his own self perception of who he was. Again the use of 'if that' at the end of the sentence e.g. if that makes sense – seeking my approval and/or understanding. Being a key part – being part of something and being an important part of it too. Playing bugle in his family church made him proud. He stood out.</p> <p>Marching past people. Demonstrating something. Up front both in the march and the pulpit. In front of people. Again the idea of travel emerges in his narrative. Marching down a road and arriving at the pulpit. Being observed on that journey.</p>
	27.	R: What was that like?	
The experience announced his arrival as an individual, separate from his family	28.	<p>J: It...it was, thinking back on it I knew it was important because unusually I'd got a bit of a dry mouth, em, but for me it was looking back now, probably a defining moment cos The Crooked Spire was our, was my parish</p>	<p>Dry mouth and nerves. Defining moment. Key milestone. Something that influenced/changed his direction. Confirmed – given part of his identity?</p>



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He enjoyed standing out from the crowd		church, that's where we'd all gone as children every Sunday morning, em, I'd also been confirmed there, eh, by the Bishop of Derby, so it was quite a pivotal bit but it was nice to, em, just play the last post in a bit where me and my step brothers had been for quite a number of years (mmm).	Part of the family history – coming back to where he went with family with own identity.
	29.	R: You said, em, looking back and I suppose that made me wonder if it now has a different significance or....	
<p>He is who he is as a result of certain defining events in his life.</p> <p>Choosing not to examine some of his experiences and the feelings associated with them.</p> <p>Choosing now to examine some of his experiences and the feelings associated with them.</p>	30.	J: It, <u>if I'm honest</u> , things probably have a bit more significance, Sue, em, I know, in, em, and I'm trying to balance out with...not being maudlin or anything else, but trying to look at it in, em, a bit of real perspective in terms of <u>they are bits that have shaped where I am today</u> , em, bits that I've probably never factored in, but more importantly, probably, bits that I've actually stuck in a <u>cupboard and locked away</u> for a long time (right). Because it's only...if you'd have asked me 3 years ago, I would not have been happy talking about my step brother (okay).	<p>Honesty...new insight...wasn't honest before? Or I'm going to be honest now and make myself vulnerable to your judgement.</p> <p>Trying to achieve a balance of what?</p> <p>To know what's real?</p> <p>Things shape where he is now, send him in different directions.</p> <p>Cupboard, locked up, out of sight. He put them there. So others wouldn't see them? So he didn't have to talk about them?</p> <p>Movement/change to where he now can talk about things. What's allowed this?</p>
	31.	R: So...that's a change for you...	
	32.	J: Eh, yeah, that's a big change (mmmm)	
	33.	R: So...we haven't quite got you into the	

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		Navy yet...	
<p>Leaving to join the Navy marked the beginning of adulthood.</p> <p>Leaving to join the Navy marked the end of childhood.</p>	34.	<p>J: Yeah, I joined at 16,em, went down to HMS Raleigh, em, and again it was that journey on my own, em, and I...I can remember sort of leaving, cos where we live, em, the train goes past the bottom of the street (right) and, eh, it's quite surreal really because I'd packed everything, there was a kit list that you got to take down to Raleigh, I'd put it all in, got it all sorted and, basically just said goodbye to my mum and me stepbrothers, said, on, eh, the steps of the house, and walked off.</p>	<p>Leaving, on his own Sense of train representing potential to leave – there at the bottom of the street, waiting. Surreal? Didn't seem real? Dream like? Done everything himself, then stepped out. Sense of finality....heading out...a cowboy striding out without looking back. No ceremony.</p>
	35.	R: Can you tell me what that felt like?	
<p>Joining the Navy felt like a new beginning.</p> <p>Joining the Navy allowed him to leave the past behind him.</p> <p>Joining the Navy gave him independence.</p>	36.	<p>J: Em, it's probably a little bit of turning my back on them, em, and 'this is it now, I'm out here on me own now, I'll stand on me own two feet, I don't have to go ask anybody for anything....'</p>	<p>You don't matter any more? I don't need you anymore? I'm on my own...independent, free...</p>
	37.	R: And, not making any assumptions, was it a good thing to be turning your back on them, or bad, or....	
He wanted both to belong to his family and to leave	38.	J: I think it was a mixed thing, em, part of me	Mixed feelings – wanting to be a part of the family but wanting not to need them, to start out on his own

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<p>it behind forever.</p> <p>He felt that having left the house to join the Navy he ceased to exist for his family.</p> <p>Leaving to join the Navy felt final – there was no going back.</p> <p>He felt he had made the right decision in joining the Navy.</p> <p>He felt he belonged in the Navy.</p>		<p>that, still wanted that family contact, but then there was another part of me, based on the last few years, of 'that's it,</p> <p>I don't need you now, I'm on me way' (right) em, and I, em, I can remember going on the train past the bottom of the street thinking they might be outside but no, they'd got on as business, you know, business as usual as me mum would say, you know, you make your bed you lie in it and you just keep carrying on. Em, got to Tor Point, eh did six weeks, eh, and you go into a Unit where you're isolated for 2 weeks, while, whilst you readjust to being away from home and, there's lots of polishing boots, mundane activity, and all the rest of it, yeah, and if I'm honest, I actually thrived on it, I, I really, you know, I enjoyed, I felt like, you know, this is, I've made a good decision here, I'm in the Navy, it might be a bit mundane but it's great (okay) and then on the Friday, eh, we all swore allegiance to the Queen and then, you come out of that unit and join the rest of the ship's company at Raleigh.</p>	<p>journey (on my way) Bit of anger? Sticking finger up 'I don't need you'</p> <p>Disappointment? Responsibility for his own choices. Get on with it. Hidden away (isolated) to make the move away from home? To make the break? Keep you busy to help that to happen? Did he feel isolated? Was that a good or a bad thing? Final split from home? Honesty...emotional honesty? I'm part of something.</p> <p>Part of a group with a shared vision and direction. Joining....</p>
	39.	R: Right, so after 2 weeks....	
He felt his parents' lack of	40.	J: After 2 weeks you join the main ship's	'You're in' – you're part of the team.

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emotions wasn't normal.  He recognises the absurdity of his parents' way of being in the world.		company, eh, and then you're in...it's all part of your basic training (right) eh, my mum and dad came down to Tor Point for the passing out parade at Raleigh, eh, which was, it was good, but it was, you know, some mums and dads were excited, some...it was...there was a whole different sort of, it was just like 'right, alright, nice to see you'.	Sense of his parents' reaction being different, less than, disappointing.
	41.	R: So that's a couple of times that you've, you've...once when you thought they might be at the bottom of the road for the train (yep) and....I get a sense you were disappointed with...	
He felt that his parents didn't love him the way they should have done.  Emotions were unacceptable in his family so he learnt to hide them.  You had to cope in his family, no matter what.	42.	J: Yeah, I think, well, I'm not going to deny it Sue, yeah, it was, but it, you know, I've got to factor in that my mum and dad were brought up through the war, em, my mum, her background is quite hardy, my step dad's is the same cos he lost his dad when he was 21, so you know, it, you know, they worked long hours and stuff like that and I've sort of put, well tried to put it into perspective now as a 50 year old and whereas at 13, 14 year old I probably wanted a lot of nurturing, love and affection, arm round (mmm) that sort of thing, em, I never really showed any true emotion because I always felt that that	Going to be honest and open and not deny my feelings. They hurt me because they too were hurt/damaged? Hardy – tough? Harsh, no nonsense, not emotionally expressive?  Wanted more, to be loved, enclosed, held.  Emotions unacceptable. You don't show them. Keep on going, regardless, don't show what you are feeling.

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		would not be acceptable (right). You know, you've just got to keep going no matter what (mmmm) don't be emotive in any shape or form	
	43.	R: That was a strong message you got.....?	
He felt full to the brim with unexpressed emotions.  The pressure of holding in his emotions would build until he exploded.	44.	J: Yep, and I suppose that's why, eh, it only came out in small pockets but small pockets were because everything else had built up inside (right) hence the fact, grabbing the knife, boomph, (okay so when it did come out...) it erupted (mmmm) Yeah.	Little bits of emotion escaped in small amounts. Build up of emotions to point of bursting. Building up inside of him. Erupting like a volcano – explosion, fire, rage, damage, heat Sense of this being unexpected and/or unpredictable?
	45.	R: So you went into the main ship's company, that's you 16 and in the Navy for 2 weeks.....	
Leaving to join his first ship felt like an adventure.  He wanted to maintain links with home.	46.	J: Yep, passed, passed out at Raleigh, em and then from Raleigh went to my trade training which was at HMS Sultan (okay) to be a marine engineer and mechanic. Em, successfully completed all that, and then you get your first draft to join the fleet (okay) and, there was me and about 4 others, we'd all been drafted onto HMS Plymouth, which was over at Chatham (okay) so obviously pack your kit to join the fleet, this is quite exciting, first ship, eh, prior to that you get asked, eh, a variety of options in terms of	Joining...lots of joining...joining a group, being part of...  Wanting to maintain links to home still? To be part of home but part of Navy – to live in two worlds?

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He wanted to get away/to go places.		ships that you want and everything else, and obviously for me, em, one of my first choices had been, eh, the Sheffield, obviously being from Oldingham (right), it's right next door (okay) so that was a key bit that i'd put in for, but I got the Plymouth, em, joined the Plymouth to find out it was in dry dock, it wasn't actually going anywhere (laughs) it was refitting	Thwarted in his attempt to go somewhere? To leave?
	47.	R: So Plymouth wasn't on your list of choices...	
He felt part of the family that was the ship's company.	48.	J: It wasn't on my list of choices, no, but, em, it's still exciting just to get on a, eh, a ship and you're part of, eh, instead of cleaning boots, doing all that sort of stuff (mm) you're actually out there part of the ship's company doing it for real now (mmm), part of the fleet (mm). Em, as joining the Plymouth, I ended up going on the Rothsea for 2 weeks sea time, em, which was the most horrendous experience of my life because I spent most of it being sea sick (right).	Being part of a ship's company.  Being on the ship means your membership of the group is real. No longer just waiting on the outside – off on journey with others.  Not what he expected/hoped for, this new life?
	49.	R: The Rothsea is what kind of ship....	
	50.	J: Em, they were old, em, oh, I'm trying to think of them now, they were Rothsea class frigates, they were small frigates with 2 boilers (okay) so they were a lot smaller than	A smaller world than he'd wanted to be part of? Wanting to be part of an extended family?

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		the Sheffield was (right) so....	
	51.	R: So that was your first experience of being at sea (yep) I presume that you....I don't know how long you served or how many different ships.....	
<p>Being at sea is what being in the Navy is all about.</p> <p>Being at sea gave him a sense of freedom.</p> <p>The Navy offered him the opportunity to escape normal life.</p>	52.	J: Em, I only had a small number of ships but I came out in, em, I joined in 79, left in 85, em, but everything I did, apart from the exception of the, in between the Sheffield and the Exeter, and then coming out, I was always based on sea bourne ships (right). So the Plymouth was a sea draft (yip), eh, from the Plymouth I went to the Sheffield, which was a sea draft, then from the Sheffield I went to the Exeter, which was a sea draft (okay). So, out of that 6 years, there was a, eh, initial training which was 3 months, 3 and a half months, there was the bit in between the Sheffield and the Exeter, which again was probably 4 months, and then I spent probably the last 6 months on shore before I came out and got discharged (right).	<p>Being at sea is what being in the Navy is all about.</p> <p>Time on shore was not the same as time at sea. Not as real?</p> <p>Not travelling forward on your journey if you are on shore?</p>
	53.	R: So a lot of sea time.....	
	54.	J: Yes, which is probably uncommon in today's Navy (is it?) from what I've heard there's not a lot of , a massive amount of sea time....a different thing....	Things not the same nowadays. Today's naval people somehow less, or have less of an authentic Navy experience. Not the same as we had/the same as us...

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	55.	R: So, during that time, you've got...the active service you saw was on the Sheffield?	
	56.	J: It was on the Sheffield, yeah....	
	57.	R: Okay, can you tell me a little bit about that?	
<p>Joining the ship felt like he'd achieved his dream.</p> <p>Joining the ship felt like coming home.</p>	58.	<p>J: Yeah, em, joined the Sheffield in 1980, em, you know, and it, and in any, without wishing to sound too cliched, it's probably one of the best moments in terms of, I'd caught the train from Chatham, was joining the ship, the ship that I'd originally wanted (yeah)</p> <p>Yeah and it was, you know, I'm joining Sheffield, and, eh, I can remember coming through Unicorn gate, turning left, it was in the dry dock, it was there, it was fairly late at night, eh, but it was all lit up, eh and I can remember just thinking 'I've got to pinch myself here (really) I'm going to go and join the Sheffield'.</p>	<p>Another important moment. Sense of key milestones in his history. Good moments and bad moments in the account so far.</p> <p>Journey there recounted again....getting away...going places.</p> <p>Finally getting what he wanted.</p> <p>The thing dreams are made of. Can't believe it. Pinching himself to check he is not dreaming.</p>
	59.	R: Tell me more, what was going on ....	
<p>Joining the ship felt like joining a new adoptive family.</p> <p>He was proud to be part of</p>	60.	J: Eh, it was just a whole sense of, em, be..., eh excitement, real child excitement of....you, whilst you've got this intrepidation of 'I don't know what it's going to be like the ships' company and everything else (mmm) just the	<p>Excitement</p> <p>Like a child joining a new adoptive family?</p> <p>First of its kind – special, unique –part of something</p>



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something special.  Joining the ship allowed him to feel linked to home.		fact that you've got this big Type 42 destroyer, the first one of its kind, it's from the town, the city, where you're closest to, you know, eh, being in Sheffield I could get on the train and you're there in 15 minutes (mmm). It was, it was just really, em for me it was really an exciting time.	special and unique. Makes you special too? The ship is part of where you come from. So you're making a mark in the place you came from?
	61.	R: Mmmm, you said it was child like excitement, I'm wondering what you meant?	
Joining the ship filled him with anticipation and excitement about the future.	62.	J: I just couldn't wait to get on board. It was like 'okay, where am I, where am I living, what am I doing, where am I going' (okay) just 'wow, this is great'...	Anticipation. Impatience to get on his way. To get on with adventure, life.
	63.	R: I can see, just from your smile, you remember that...	
The Navy fulfilled his expectations, unlike his family, which disappointed him.  When he joined a new ship, everything around him felt fresh and new and full of possibilities.	64.	J: Yeah, it was, and if I'm honest it didn't disappoint me either, it, eh, joining in 1980 as I did, we'd got a whole lot of, eh, young lads joining at the same time because obviously we'd got to come out of what they call refit (yep). So the ship's been repaired, it's in refit and it comes out and does a lot of workups to make sure it's sea worthy and everything else and then there was the major trip of the ??? patrol coming up in 81-82. So it was an exciting time, it was, there was a lot of fresh faces, young faces (mmm) stuff like that, so it	Unlike his family/parents the ship didn't disappoint him?  Part of group of brothers joining at the same time?  Newness, freshness, not the same old, same old...

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		was ....	
	65.	R: Em, one of the things you know I'm looking at in this study is relationships in....(yeah) and I'm wondering whether you were in a relationship at the time when you joined the Sheffield	
He felt that his relationship happened to him and was not something he actively chose.	66.	J: I wasn't, no, not when I joined the Sheffield, em, whilst I was on the Sheffield, eh, I got into a relationship with someone I'd known at school (right). Em, on leave, met, bumped into them, purely at, em, purely coincidental, and started to develop a relationship with somebody that I'd known at school (right).	Coincidence, by accident, falling into a relationship like you fall into a hole?
	67.	R: So had you been in a relationship previously when you went on any of your ships?	
	68.	J: Nope....	
	69.	R: I know you were a youngster so (both laugh)	
A relationship was not something he sought out, it just happened.	70.	J: That, if I'm honest, that was probably the last thing on my mind, em, but that, you know, that was, em meeting Amber who was my first wife and, you know, that was where the relationship started.	Honesty again....
	71.	R: Ah, so to clarify, the girl that you mentioned that you met on leave, from the	

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		Sheffield (yep) you then married?	
He wanted to end the relationship when the ship sailed.  There was a clash between freedom and responsibility to another.	72.	J: Ultimately married, yeah, em, but again we em, we'd gone through all the work ups and were due to leave England in 81/82, eh, about November, end of October November time and I think we split up in September, which was probably more to do with me, going 'I think we ought to have a break' (okay) because basically I'm going away for 6 months (okay)	'We' can mean him and wife or can mean him and his shipmates.  Not wanting to be held back? Wanting freedom? Leaving behind the relationship....burning bridges Incompatibility of relationship and deployment?
	73.	R: And what was behind....	
He thought that being in a relationship while being away with his ship would restrict his freedom.  He didn't want to feel restricted by a sense that he should be faithful to his girlfriend.	74.	J: Em,I suppose it's the fact it was a 6 month trip, it was going to be quite exciting, and there was part of it where I didn't know what it was going to be like, and if, there was part of it, a morality bit, in terms of I don't want to be having a girlfriend and cheat on her....	The unknown ....opportunities ....not being restricted in those opportunities.  Not right to cheat on someone. Sense of right and wrong.
	75.	R: Okay, so you were thinking about....how long had you been going out with her then at that stage?	
	76.	J: Em,it hadn't been a long relationship, it had probably only been 4 or five months...	
	77.	R: And how old would you have been, I've kind of lost track of...	

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	78.	J: Em, 81, eh, I'd have been, would be 18 (right) So, em, yeah, be 18, joined the Sheffield at 17	
	79.	R: So when you sailed off in the Sheffield you were footloose and fancy free?	
A relationship would restrict his freedom while he was away.	80.	J: Technically, that was, and I think that was and I think that was probably the driving force in my mind, in terms of 'I'm going away for 6 months...see what...footloose and fancy free'	Technically? What does he mean? He is an engineer. Everything was as it should be? Technically correct?
	81.	R: Do you remember what you felt like....	
His priority was adventure over relationship.	82.	J: I think I, if I'm honest Sue, I was probably more excited about going away and, em, I also felt that, eh, I'd not tied somebody else down (right). And I'm sure that, you know, other people do it, and they develop, but for me I just wasn't, it was my first big trip away (okay),eh, and as much as I liked, eh, Amber, I was still, eh, not really sure	Leaving people behind. Seems slightly embarrassed – is it okay to prioritise adventure over relationship? He seems to be asking. Not restricting her – tying her down.  Maybe I'm different from others?
	83.	R: You mentioned morals...	
He had a strong value around being faithful to his partner.  The challenges of holding down a relationship while you are away at sea feels	84.	J: That was part of my thinking in terms of 'you never know who you're going to meet' and everything else, em, and so if I'm honest, probably easier to split up than, actually have that moral dilemma of you meet someone and you know there's someone else and all the rest of it (mmm)	Honesty is important. Not wanting to face a moral dilemma.

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complicated.			
	85.	R: But you actually married her in the end....so I guess there's more to tell...	
Turning towards home left him wanting someone to return to.	86.	J: Yeah, em, it was bizarrely, I think it was towards the end of the trip, em, so it would be probably March/April time (okay) of 82, on our way back, eh, that I actually wrote to her and it was like, you know, I know what we did before we went away, blah, blah, blah, if you want to see each other, this that and the other, you know, we'll see where we will go and em...	Heading back home...so thoughts turn to home? Why bizarrely? About to re-enter world of 'back home'. 'On our way back' so thoughts of what going back to? Sense of not really committing himself in the letter – a tentativeness, withheld something of himself? Relationship as a journey people go on together?
	87.	R: Can you remember what was motivating that, where your head was at with it?	
Having his freedom while away on the ship made him realize he wanted a relationship.	88.	J: It's probably the fact that, em....., I'd actually, think, I'd got to the point where I'd actually really like, you know, although I'd been away, I'd not been, I had been footloose and fancy free in terms of yeah, I'd been out drinking, I'd been out partying, I'd done all of that, but I'd not seen anyone else, I'd not done any of that, so it was like 'actually..., I quite like this girl' (mm, okay), em, and want, you know, at the time I didn't know i wanted to marry her but it was a case of 'I do miss this girl'....	Been away and had freedom but had it disappointed? Was it not what he expected? Sounds surprised to realize these feelings. Not acknowledged previously?
	89.	R: I wonder what it was like to be on a ship	

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		and have that realisation?	
Wanting his girlfriend to understand how he felt about her.  Wanting someone on his side who didn't listen to what others said about him.	90.	J: Em....the song at the time that really struck home, and I can remember writing to her, about it, was Smokey Robinson (okay) and it was 'I don't care what they say about me' it was that song (mmm)and that was one of the things I'd put in the letter -just have a listen to that (okay) and that...	Struck home – something got through to him, hit him, had an impact on him?  Communicating his feelings through words and music of another. This will help you understand what I mean/feel. You and I against the world? Just us?
	91.	R: What was it that it was saying and ...that you wanted to say?	
Wanting someone on his side.	92.	J: I think it was probably more to do with, em, you know, people may, can think what they want (mmm), can say what they want, it doesn't really matter, about, what they think about me, but, you know, I still really like you (mmm).	Song is about not caring about what other people say or think about him...  Let's not pay attention to what others say or think...it's just about us.
	93.	R: And...what happened?	
	94.	J: Em, ultimately, em, we got married in, em December 82.	
	95.	R: So you came back and....	
Active service confronted him with his own mortality.  Experiencing a close encounter with death	96.	J: Yeah but, I mean, obviously, Sheffield got, after we'd got hit in May, eh, there was a lot of time before we ended up getting on a ship back to the UK and, one of my, one of my real lasting memories was considering the	Being away from home and being hit.  Lots of time Immortality project? Wanting to still exist, having been reminded of possibility of death? Wanting to exist for a longer time?

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<p>made him aware of the contingency of existence.</p> <p>Wanting to be kept alive in a sense through the memories of others.</p> <p>Feeling that having children would give him a form of immortality.</p> <p>Experiencing the unboundedness of freedom made having a relationship and children an urgent priority.</p>		<p>fact that, em, having I suppose experienced being close to death, that if I had died, my, the memory of me, would have been really quite short term. And my rationale was that my brothers would remember me a little but that would be it (okay). Em, my mum and dad, my mum would certainly remember me but once she's gone, I've gone, and I suppose I can remember thinking well the real thing is that your children will always remember you (okay). Em, and having done the footloose and fancy free, not just on that trip but em, been around Europe, done a, at least 18 months, yeah 18 months sea time, em, it was sort of in, probably in my psyche that probably, getting married is something I'd consider, em I needed to think about having kids, it was something I needed to seriously consider.</p>	<p>With the death of my family, then I would die too...the memory of me....but also sense of a final death of me, myself.</p> <p>With children you won't ever be forgotten.</p> <p>Done freedom, now time to have kids....Sense of need to be rooted, fixed...having had freedom.</p>
	97.	R: So, you wrote the letter you described before doing	
	98.	J: Em, March time...	
	99.	R: That was before going to the	
	100.	J: Before going to the Falklands, yep	
	101.	R: But you weren't then back home again....	
Spending most of his time drunk when back from	102.	J: Em, basically Sue, we came back and I couldn't remember, we were probably back	Returning....

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<p>active service.</p> <p>Being sent back to the Falklands made him anxious.</p> <p>Pushing his partner into marriage early to alleviate his anxiety about leaving.</p> <p>Once he decided he wanted to get married he made it happen as quickly as possible.</p>		<p>end of May, beginning of June, there, you sent us on leave, and I'll be honest, I probably spent most of it drunk, eh, but on the one day I was sober I actually proposed, em, and, Amber, Amber accepted, eh, the plan was to get married in 12 months time, em, but I was joining the Exeter, em, beginning of, eh, I was joining the Exeter beginning of December, eh the Exeter would then sail back to the Falklands, early January (right) eh, and, we..I always used the fact that separation pay was probably a driving, you know, I'd said, you know, we'd not got a lot of money, we were a young couple, we'd not got massive amount of money and I, I suppose as part of, part of me probably talked Amber into getting married earlier than we should of done, eh, but we decided to get married on the 18th of December 1982. Eh, registrar office, we had a small reception in a pub, eh, and all that, I got married in, eh uniform, so I didn't have to buy a suit. We went for 3days 2 nights to York for our honeymoon, and then, eh, beginning of January I sailed back down the Falklands for 6 months.</p>	<p>Being honest again... 'You sent us on leave' – you're not one of us. Us against the world? Drunk most of the time. I was sober when I proposed so I meant it? It shouldn't be devalued by you thinking I did it because I was drunk?</p> <p>Faced with another departure and to a place where he'd experienced the death of colleagues</p> <p>Pragmatic reasons for urgency?</p> <p>Sense of his urgency to get married. Earlier than they should have done? Mistake to get married that early?</p> <p>Marriage achieved before he sailed back to the Falklands. Felt sense I have is of a base being established back home. Some solid ground to come back to?</p>
	103.	R: You said, I mean obviously this is a key part of what we are talking about today	



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		and....you said something about having experienced or felt you were near death, experienced the possibility of death and I'm wondering if you could say a bit more about that	
<p>Feeling Navy life had condensed lots of life experiences into a short time.</p> <p>He felt he had grown up quickly because of his experiences.</p>	104.	<p>J: I think, eh, I mean the interesting thing was they, the guys on the Sheffield had put a load of stats together about our trip and mileage wise we'd been something like, we'd done the equivalent of to the moon and back two and a half times and we'd had x amount of thousands of pounds of meat and this sort of thing and everything else, em, and then I looked at where I was and I thought right, I'm, I'm 19, you know, and already at 19 I'm pretty worldly wise.....</p>	<p>Having been on a long journey – gone out of the world he knew and into outer space and back again more than once.</p> <p>Two senses of time – actual time and experienced time. He was far travelled? Wise beyond his years?</p> <p>Grown up before most people do?</p>
	105.	R: What do you mean worldly wise?	
<p>Once he had his freedom, he didn't want to give it up.</p> <p>Wanting to explore the world in more depth than others might do.</p>	106.	<p>J: Em, the fact that I'd probably, I'd spent very little time at home on leave, I didn't necessarily go back to Oldingham, I'd sooner stay with the ships company or on the ship, this sort of thing (mmm). Em, knew my way around London pretty well, in any of the cities that we'd been to abroad, you know, most tourists stay to the tourist routes and everything else, I'd, well probably being young it was like 'well okay, let's get down</p>	<p>Worldly wise – been in the world, could find his way around, not as a tourist but as someone who seeks out the world.</p> <p>He has an adventurous nature – doesn't follow the crowd, not like other people, wants to find out what's real about the world.</p>

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Having a sense of himself as more daring and adventurous than others.		some back alleys and see what we can really find' em, and it was that sort of adventurous nature of whilst they're going there, I'm going to over here and see what I can really find out about about this place (okay). Em, rightly or wrongly, so it was that sort of adventurous, let's go and find out about this, about things	
	107.	R: And.....so you were having an adventure, and part of that adventure was to be on the Sheffield and the Falklands...is it a war officially or a conflict?	
Feeling others misunderstand the nature of his experience of active service.	108.	J: I think it's down as a war for most people, em, it's down as a conflict officially, Sue, it was Sue, whatever you want to call it it meant that people went and on both sides, lost their lives, for me it doesn't really matter what you call it it's still the same ....	Fighting for something – away from home, but fighting for something at home?
	109.	R: Sorry to confuse my dates, but so I really understand, so when you, the ship, turned to go South, the status of your relationship was...	
He had a sense that there was someone waiting for him on his return from active service.	110.	J: It was, in the balance of, the potential was we were going to get back together (right) the letters and everything else were quite clear that we were potentially going to get back together (right) and see each other	Could go either way?

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		when I got back to Oldingham and everything else, em....	
	111.	R: So I guess I'm wondering, then, what it was like for you to head South, having potentially set up the reunion and...	
<p>Finding it hard to believe that he might be facing death.</p> <p>Feeling alone while facing the possibility of death, his feelings for his girlfriend felt stronger.</p> <p>Sense of disconnection between him and his family.</p>	112.	J: The interesting thing is that I, I've got my original aluminium metal dog tag, eh, that I made, that we were never supposed to use, eh, but it was Amber's name I engraved on the back, so, you know that's an indicator really of where we, where I was, in terms of what I thought about her	<p>Something unreal about engraving this dog tag that was never supposed to be used? Never thought he'd be in this situation?</p> <p>Does he mean Amber has become the person he most cares for back home?</p>
	113.	R: Tell me what you mean....what...	
<p>Wanting his girlfriend to know how he felt should he die.</p> <p>Wanting to be remembered after his death.</p>	114.	J: In terms of, em, for me it was that, affection, what you feel for someone, you know, and I think that again is something quite significant if you're going to put someone's name, and I put her name and a couple of kisses that I engraved, on the back of something that potentially is going to be the last thing that people identify you with, should anything go wrong, is probably a big message for, eh, somebody to do.	<p>Means something. Significant.</p> <p>Sending a message to Amber if he should die. Wanting her to know how he felt. Communicating from beyond the grave.</p> <p>Wanting to be remembered – to continue to exist in somebody's memories?</p>

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	115.	R: Is that how you saw it when you were doing it at the time....did it feel as if....	
<p>The meaning he brings to his experience has changed over time. They thought it was an adventure.</p> <p>Sense of discovering new significance in his actions.</p> <p>Wanting to be remembered positively by his girlfriend should he die.</p>	116.	J: It possibly, eh,it, I mean I'm saying that now as a 51 year old looking back, eh, as a 19 year old it's you know, bearing mind we were, we didn't got a clue where the Falklands were...you know,we were going again on another big adventure (mmm). Em, but I suppose, all that I've just mentioned, is me as a 51 year old looking back. As a 19 year old doing it, it was probably 'I really like this girl I hope it works out when I get back to Oldingham and I'll put this on there just in case anything happens'. So she knows I was thinking about her.	<p>No idea where the Falklands were. No inherent meaning in the task of defending that place in particular?</p> <p>No sense of foreboding. Didn't think it would come to war?</p> <p>Significance and meaning comes in looking back. How he gives it meaning now...</p> <p>The possibility of death is considered?</p>
	117.	R: So as a 51 year old....	
The way he makes sense of things has changed over time.	118.	J: It was probably a bigger, yeah... you know, you're not going to do something like that for anybody that you don't really seriously think about (mmm)	Sounds almost as if he's interpreting the actions of someone other than himself. A different him....
	119.	R: Relationships I guess can go on whether you're in the same place or not, they're in your mind, and I'm wondering where that relationship was in your mind during ....the war....	
While at sea, the ship and his colleagues are all that	120.	J: Em, we wrote a few letters, em and I eh, you know, eh, I'd obviously, em, thought	Struggles to find words and seems sheepish. Seems to be wondering if it's okay to put Amber to the back of his

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<p>matter.</p> <p>The ship was the world and his shipmates his family.</p> <p>Keeping the two worlds of home and Navy life apart.</p> <p>Sharing emotions and thoughts with his partner felt unsafe.</p> <p>It was important to appear strong and unemotional.</p>		<p>about her, but it was, but, if I'm honest, when we got down to, when we started heading towards the Falkands and the exclusion zone and everything else, em, whilst I thought about her my, em, I suppose my real focus was on, eh, the guys that I was with, keeping the ship in shape and everything else, em, but being the sort of person that I was, any letters that I wrote would be quite mundane, there'd be no real clues in terms of how I was feeling, what was going through my mind, it was 'yeah, everythings...' they were very mundane letters (okay). There was no real insight, you know, I, em, I mean bearing in mind we'd, we were asked to write wills at 19, eh, I don't think I even put that in a letter to say we'd been asked to write a will and expanded on any of that (right). So....</p>	<p>mind. Seems to wonder what do I think of him that he did this?</p> <p>Focus on the ship and the task in hand?</p> <p>No clues – having emotions is a crime? Have to be a detective to work out what his were?</p> <p>Thoughts about his shipmates and the ship being in shape.</p> <p>No feelings given away – that was the kind of person he was. No insight offered to others as to what was going on.</p> <p>Sense of how unusual it is to face death so overtly at such a young age.</p> <p>He is commenting on how even this unusual and striking activity wasn't shared by him with his girlfriend.</p>
	121.	R: And you didn't put it in the letter because...	
<p>Feeling he would be judged negatively by others if he showed any emotion.</p> <p>Feeling it was important</p>	122.	J: I think it was partly to do with the way I'd been brought up Sue, you know, this is what I was expected to do, you know, there was no, you know, you might go through a whole raft of emotion but you won't show it (okay). It's not, you've not got, there was not, you're not	<p>You might feel but you can't show your emotions – message from his upbringing. This is only partly why he didn't – what else influenced this? His personality? The circumstances?</p> <p>Don't give any one any evidence? Police, judgement, crime?</p>

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<p>not to disclose himself to the world.</p> <p>Wondering if his refusal to show his emotion makes him different from others.</p>		<p>going to... there was no evidence that you feel one way or another (mmm).</p> <p>Emm, whether the other lads were like that I don't know, I can only speak for myself but that was, you know, that was based on my mum's clear statement 'you make your bed you lie in it'. So don't cry about it, don't get upset, that's what you've decided, that's what you've got to face up to now (mm).</p>	<p>Am I different? Not talking for the rest of the lads on the ship. Does he hope not to be different/weird/abnormal?</p> <p>Learnt from my mother – don't show your emotions, you got yourself into this situation. Get on with it.</p> <p>'Clear' statement – no room for misunderstandings.</p>
	123.	R: In your view, how was that	
<p>Recognising that in hiding his emotions he was denying part of who he was.</p> <p>Expressing his emotions enables him to be truer to who he is.</p> <p>Feeling sad that he denied a part of himself for so long.</p>	124.	<p>J: Em, I think in hindsight it's, it's useful at times and it's something I've really struggled with because the person now, I'm more emotional now, in touch with me emotionally, than I ever have been, and I think that's a good thing because I know I am very emotive, but I've never been...expressed it (okay) and, if I'm honest, I regret, probably, not being at this point now, a lot....many, many years ago (okay)</p>	<p>Strategy useful at times but also caused him problems – 'struggled' (picture him physically struggling with emotions as though they were assaulting him)</p> <p>Made him out of touch with his emotions?</p> <p>Good to be in touch with his emotions.</p> <p>Honesty again....</p> <p>Is naturally emotionally but hasn't expressed it – having to not be himself as he is naturally.</p> <p>Wishes he could have been in touch with his emotions more earlier in his life.</p>
	125.	R: You used two different words there, em, you said you were aware of ...not expressing	

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		emotion and also not feeling emotion and I'm wondering if you could say a bit more about...	
<p>Not being able to ask his partner to meet his needs.</p> <p>Seeing his feelings as unacceptable.</p> <p>Passively allowing his partner to take the lead in their relationship.</p> <p>Trying to control his partner's construct of him.</p> <p>Wanting to be seen yet fearing rejection.</p> <p>Drinking and fighting as a way of dealing with difficult emotions.</p>	126.	<p>J: It's probably the fact that, em, whilst you know, eh, I would have conversations with, you know, we'll skip a bit, but once we got married, it was great, em, and we'd have conversations but they, em, I would never really share anything in terms of how I felt, eh, I would, you know, if Amber wanted to do something, I'd go 'oh yeah, okay, whatever you want to do that's fine' (okay). Mmmm, little resistance, where as, where part of me might be going 'I don't really want to be doing this' (okay) I don't really want to do this (okay). Em, and I, I was sort of, em quite, I suppose quite passive and some points and, em we never really, I mean, she never asked but I never, em, spoke about what happened down the Falklands or anything else, em, even though she'd probably seen me at the worse when I got back in 82, in the fact that, you know, as I mentioned earlier, I probably spent all that time drunk and fighting.</p>	<p>No sharing – conversations would happen but no sharing of how he really felt. Going along with his partner's desires.</p> <p>Little resistance – no fight, no conflict, surrender?</p> <p>Passive – not aggressive.</p> <p>She never asked? How would it have been had she asked? He was clearly behaving in a way that was 'not normal' yet she didn't ask and he didn't tell. On return he spent all his time drunk and fighting. Why? Was the return so difficult?</p>
	127.	R: Tell me about it, tell me what it was like to come back....	
Returning brought the	128.	J: Em, it, it wasn't a nice feeling, if I'm	Returning didn't feel good.

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discomfort of guilt at leaving the ship (and shipmates) behind.  Feeling he might be different/abnormal.		honest, em, yes you, yeah you're coming back, yes you're still alive, but, em, it wasn't nice to fly back to England, and it wasn't nice, em, not coming back on, for me, em, I don't know about the other guys, but for me personally, it wasn't a nice feeling, em....	Flying back wasn't nice – wanted to come back on the ship. Again – not wishing to speak for anyone else. Am I different somehow? Am I the abnormal one?
	129.	R: Can I stop you a minute ....are you okay...to keep going....	
	130.	J: Yeah, I'm fine Sue, don't worry...	
	131.	R: Okay, I will keep an eye on you (both laugh)...in that case can I ask you what you mean by not nice?	
Feeling publicly shamed.  Feeling like a failure.  Loss of professional pride.  Loss of something he was part of.	132.	J: It, it, it was, em, a real sense of failure and also, a little bit, from me, embarrassment, about, em, not coming back on the ship, you know there was this big thing in the papers it's the first ship that's been hit since the second world war and if I'm honest it wasn't something that I felt particularly, know you, proud of, em... I'm proud of being part of the ship's company, I'm proud of being part of that group of people, em, I'm proud of serving my country and everything else, but the event, and the final outcome of having to leave the ship behind and everything else didn't make me feel particularly good.	Embarrassment – shame? Failure....first to be hit for many years. Public shame and failure? Can't be proud. Proud of being part of that group/family, proud of serving country but this is tarnished by what happened. By being hit, by losing the ship and having to leave it behind. 'The event' – distanced way of describing the missile hitting the ship. Doesn't even want to talk about it?



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	133.	R: You were embarrassed about...	
Grieving over the loss of the ship and his shipmates.  Seeking to connect with his girlfriend on his return.	134.	J: Em, failing, not managing to, eh, save the ship, that sort of thing, em, and again, I suppose what, emotionally, you know, you ask for.... I can remember them asking who you want to meet at Brize Norton, eh, and I think I'd put Amber down, obviously my mum and dad, em, and when we got to Brize Norton she wasn't there and I was....em.....	Failure – not saving...rescuing....the ship. Lots of hesitation and fillers – feels like shame to me.  Girlfriend not there to meet him on return. How did he feel – uncared for? Unimportant?
	135.	R: What was that like for you, were you expecting...	
Feeling rejected by his girlfriend's absence on his return.  Recognising the absurdity of his family's insistence on maintaining the façade of normality upon his return.  Feeling separate and disconnected from his family.  Feeling there is no choice but to carry on as if	136.	J: Em, I thought she'd be there, yeah, with my mum and dad cos I'd put her on the list (okay). Em, and I never really asked or found out but I got a feeling my mum and dad, or certainly my mum had gone 'oh no, you're alright, we'll go and pick him up'. And she'd, I think she'd went 'oh, he's asked me to come' 'no it's alright, we'll go and get him'. Em, and .....poof, em at the time I was disappointed because I thought she, I thought she'd not wanted to come down (okay) and then I found out that she did, em, but it, it was the most bizarre reunion in the world, because it was quite, again there was no real emotion, it was like 'oh, welcome back, yeh, nice to see you'. I can remember hugging my mum,	Disappointment that she wasn't there.  Mum held the girlfriend out of the return.  Bizarre – come back from war. No emotion from parents. Very mundane? Every day? Like he'd popped off on holiday or to the shops? Family is bizarre.  No shared way of talking about what he'd been through? Let's just get on with things?

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nothing has happened.		shaking my dad's hand, then feeling a little bit of ....you know....they don't know what to say, I don't know what to say, we'll get in the car and go home then.	
	137.	R: What was that experience like for you....	
Disappointed by his parents lack of emotional response.  Hoping that his parents would recognise that he existed.  Feeling his parents didn't care if he was alive or dead.	138.	J: I suppose in some ways it's probably what I, what I'd expected based on knowing what it was like as we'd grown up, em but I suppose in the other, there was another part of me hoping that this might actually bring out a little bit more (okay). This could be the, you know, it's not every day you're going to meet someone that, eh, but for 200, well let's have a think about it, probably 250 foot, em, been away from where the missile went in, is actually back here now (mmm).	Not surprised in some ways that his parents reacted this way but he hoped for more.  He hoped for a change in his relationship with his parents. He wanted 'more' from them.  I nearly died – show that you care? Chance/fate meant he didn't die – scary thought?
	139.	R: You said 'a little bit more....what would you have liked?	
Wanting his parents to demonstrate their love for him.  Feeling his parents' lack of emotion was not normal. Always the seeker, never the sought.	140.	J: A, a bit more of a demonstration in terms of, you know, we've really missed you, blah, blah, blah, and I know they will have but it was never, you know, when you looked around and some of the wives were there and everything else, you know, it was clearly very emotive (mmm) em, to the point that my mum and dad were sat down and I had to go and find them. Which.....which just	Demonstrate you care, that you love me, that I matter.  Clearly an emotional time and yet you don't seem to care?  Don't even care enough to come to find me. I have to reach out to you.

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		about sums it up really....go and find them...	
	141.	R: It sums up.....?	
He became resigned to feeling inconsequential to his parents.  Being with his girlfriend made him feel like he existed.	142.	J: It probably sums up the way I was, em, emotion, I'd been brought up emotionally, stuff like that, you know, so I suppose there's part, like I briefly touched on me wanting that little bit more (mmm) but then accepting that's not going to happen, em, I can remember getting back and seeing Amber and being really pleased to see her and everything else. I think I saw her within 24 hours of getting back, em....	Giving up...it's not going to happen. I'm not going to get more from my parents.  Sense of moving on from parents, giving up on getting more from them, looking to get it from Amber?
	143.	R: Can you tell me a bit more about that, what it was like....?	
Establishing a new sense of 'home' as being with his girlfriend, rather than his parents.	144.	J: That was, that, you know, that was really nice, it was great, you know, it, we, it sort of confirmed the letters and everything else. It was like, you know, really, just nice to be back home with her, and stuff like that, em, and then the rest, the rest of it really was probably difficult for her, em...	Uses word 'nice' a lot. Feels fluffy and easy?  Coming back home to her. Home is with her not with parents. Establishing a new home fit to return to?
	145.	R: The rest of....?	
Getting drunk as a means of expressing his feelings.  Using alcohol deliberately to unblock his emotions.	146.	J: The time, in that initial period, it was very difficult for her, because I probably, I wasn't very good at expressing how I felt apart from, eh, getting drunk, and then going through that whole process of 'I'm happy, I'm sad, I	Getting drunk as a way to express how he felt. Deliberate use of alcohol to allow him to get to a point where he could vent emotions. Went through happy, then sad, neither of which got expressed. Not until he got to the last emotion –

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<p>Fighting as a means of expressing his feelings.</p> <p>Fighting as a way to release the pressure of feelings he felt unable to express.</p>		<p>want a fight' (okay). Em, and probably the latter bit, was the bit I was always wanting to get to so, if my memory serves me correct, I was.... that bit got shorter and shorter (okay)</p>	<p>wanting to fight – did it get expressed. Anger is an acceptable emotion somehow? Expressed through fighting physically?</p> <p>Got to wanting to fight more and more quickly. Missing out the emotions in between.</p>
	147.	<p>R: And when you said you wanted .....you wanted to fight...with Amber or....</p>	
<p>Fighting as a way to release pressure.</p>	148.	<p>J: No, no, with anyone who was around at the time and all the rest of it. I think I had a fight with my dad and my brother, eh, when I was, eh, within the first 48 hours (mm).</p>	<p>Doesn't matter who you fight with – the point was to have the fight. To get out the emotion?</p> <p>Fighting was with men, not women?</p>
	149.	<p>R: You linked that to...what was it you were feeling that you couldn't....</p>	
<p>Seeking to establish new meaning in his life following the shattering of his worldview.</p> <p>Awareness of the randomness of life and death.</p> <p>Finding new meaning in his relationship and his children.</p>	150.	<p>J: I think it was purely and simply the fact that it was, you know, I am glad to be alive, it was a close call, it was all that sort of thing, eh, and, eh, what does the future look like (mmm). You know, what, em....and I think once we'd got married, em, that really started to, em, I suppose really demonstrate that the important thing would be Amber and the kids.</p>	<p>An encounter with the possibility of his own death raises the question of uncertainty over the future.</p> <p>Again, a sense that he has left his family behind to focus on a future with his wife and children.</p>

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	151.	R: You said that ...earlier you mentioned something about one of the reasons that you asked Amber to get married was because of, as a result of your experience, can you say a bit more about that?	
<p>The birth of his child represented a new beginning.</p> <p>Feeling he now had a new family to go home to.</p>	152.	J: Em, eh, we got married, as I said in December 82, went away for the Falklands, came back and then, em, my son was born in September 84 and I got a radio message, eh, telegram from the Ros, eh, Amber had sent it, saying that she was pregnant. That was, that again was a, a whole new chapter, it was great, it was exciting, and everything else, em...	<p>Again, a sense of marriage as a new beginning, a new chapter.</p> <p>Turn the page on a previous chapter?</p> <p>Exciting ...a new family being started.</p>
	153.	R: Em, you seemed to say that something about the active service meant you focused on children....	
<p>Awareness of being thrown into a family at random.</p> <p>Feeling he didn't really matter to his family.</p> <p>Fear of being forgotten and therefore never having existed.</p>	154.	J: Yep, yeah, it was about the fact that, em, for me, this, you have one, you come into the world and you're part of a family and...most of us, unless you've got a really close knit family who constantly meet and have that really close association with each other, and this is just my opinion, you, if you've got a real association with people and you're constantly talking about them and everything else, then you remember them. But we didn't	<p>Thowness – thrown into one family and can't chose what kind of family it is. Didn't get what he wanted – the close family.</p> <p>If you don't have this closeness you won't be remembered. You'll be forgotten when you die. You won't carry on in their memories after death. You don't matter?</p> <p>Environment – quite a cold word, like he was in a scientific experiment. Harlow's monkeys?!</p>

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<p>Feeling isolated and unconnected from his family.</p> <p>Finding his family distant and uncommunicative. Wanting to be important to people.</p> <p>Wanting to live on in people's memories after his death.</p> <p>Seeing children as a way to live on after you die.</p>		<p>have big, I wasn't brought up in an environment where, you know, my mum's got a big family, my dad had got a big family, and we never had big family gatherings. Christmas time was always just me, my mum and dad and my brothers (mmm). There was no extended families coming in, we didn't get together with .... I think once only we got together with my dad's side of family and the most significant time I can remember getting together with my mum's side of the family was when my grandad retired at 65 or 60 as it was, eh, but my dad didn't come to that event so we, so I wasn't, I wasn't from this environment where it's really close and it's tight knit and it's everything else and so I suppose in my head, em, my feeling was that the people that would really remember you would be my children (okay).</p>	<p>Not part of something big - no big family gatherings. In the Navy you are part of something big? Big family gatherings on the ship? At reunions? Tight knit – close, aligned, together, like stitches in a jumper!</p> <p>Still a split in the family – no togetherness – even at this one big gathering.</p> <p>Children as an immortality project? To be remembered you need to have children.</p>
	155.	R: And it was important...you wanted to be remembered....?	
<p>Sense of having lived more intensely than others.</p> <p>Feeling different from other people his age.</p>	156.	J: Yes, bizarrely, Sue, I don't know why, em, but it was just that, that feeling, and I suppose, and I say I don't know why because bizarrely and 19/20, I'm thinking well, you know, I've done a lot in a short space of time, em, looking around the people...I'd lost	<p>Am I odd to want to be remembered?</p> <p>I've done a lot and left behind all my roots? I've fitted in much more than is normal for someone of my age. I'm different. Not the same anymore. Time as experienced – fitting a lot in – compared to</p>

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		contact with most of the people I went to school with and everything else but I'm just thinking, I'm sure, compared to them I've done a lot of things....	actual time.
	157.	R: To what extent do you think, if at all, that experience that you had, on the Sheffield, impacted on the relationship going forward with Juila?	
Active service gave him a of life and made him want to get married and have children more quickly.  Wanting to experience all life has to offer before time runs out.	158.	J: I think there was a couple of things, em, it probably accelerated it quicker in terms of, having been close to death, wanting to get married, wanting a family and everything else (mmm). Eh probably accelerated, eh, my thinking towards 'that's the next big thing I need to do' (okay) if you like, if there's a box in life I need to tick, I need to do this, and now, as soon as I can	Being close to death meant he wanted to do 'the next thing' more quickly. Accelerated him getting married and having children. Sense of time running out? Not necessarily having enough time? Awareness of finitude? Ticking off a box? List of things you should do in life and an urgency to get through them.
	159.	R: So there was a sense of urgency?	
Unaware of the motivators driving him to get married.  The meaning he brings to his relationship choices has changed over time.	160.	J: Not consciously, but it was just that feeling, not consciously right I need to get married here and now, but I, you know the fact that, I suppose I talked her into getting married for separation pay (both laugh) in December instead of waiting till June/July. And I think if I remember rightly, eh, I made have used the factor of I was going back	If not consciously then subconsciously? Not aware of own motivations/feelings?  Sense of urgency again – going down to the Falklands again, better do this now.  He forced the pace on getting married. What drove this? Not really separation pay. Urgency as a result of

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Manipulating his partners' emotions to get what he wanted.		down the Falklands as a bit of a, you know, 'the last time I went it wasn't the greatest experience in the world ' so I might have played on that a bit to get married before I went down.	awareness of mortality?
	161.	R: So the way you're describing it there James, as if you played on it...or....	
Having to go back to the Falklands made him feel  His experience of active service made the world seem less predictable  His experience of active service made the world seem less safe.  Sense of having to be vigilant in case of attack.	162.	J: I may have, if you like manipulated it.....I suppose part of it is if, if you've been somewhere in May of 82, and you leave everything behind and, its, its not the best experience you have, to go back there 6 months later, there is still that feeling that, you know, it could happen again, I mean it, you know, when it did happen nobody expected it to happen, it came totally out of the blue (mmm). Em, and whilst everything appeared to have settled down there was still a little bit of, you know, will they have another go, or won't they?	Lost sense of invulnerability, become aware of possibility of own death and how it can come when you don't expect it – totally out of the blue.  It could happen again so let's not put off things as I may not get another chance?  Sense of vulnerability to attack. Things might be different than they appear – if not settled, then unsettled. Unpredictable.
	163.	R: So when you went down the second time, what did it feel like leaving to go away?	
The Navy as a profession.  Frequent long absences from home just part of the job he signed up for.	164.	J: Em I, I accepted I'd got to leave to go away, cos that's part of the job, but I actually, if it demonstrates anything, we got to, to the, em Diego Gar., not Diego Garcia, St Lucia, the Caribbean and everything else and I	'Part of the job' – accept leaving and being away from home.  Keen to get home to see his wife.



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Desire to be with his wife more than his desire to stay with his ship this time.		actually, instead of coming back on the ship, I actually flew back from Antigua to get back home earlier, to eh, get back with Amber.	
	165.	R: Okay, so what was going on for you?	
Wanting to be rooted, grounded, fixed in one space. Wanting to feel at home, that he belonged somewhere.  Wanting the comfort of being with his wife.	166.	J: Em, I think it was the fact that I had missed her and I wanted to get back. I'd got married in December, em, she'd finally found a flat for us and everything else and so I just wanted actually to get back to, to just me and her and this flat that she'd found and everything else.	Getting back home...getting back to Amber...mentioned a couple of times. Sense of him wanting his feet on solid ground? Didn't come back with his ship. Prioritised relationship.
	167.	R: So you said the relationship changed the relationship in terms of the speed of getting together and you said there were 2 things...and I don't think you said what the second one was...	
Living with his wife's family felt constricting.  Feeling his wife was on his side against the world.  Feeling he had someone to	168.	J: Em, I might have forgotten now. I, em, I suppose the other bit was that, that maintaining my independence. I mean, em, by the time we'd, eh, initially we were with Amber's mum and dad at her house, em, and so while I was away the big drive was to find our own place and so, flat and everything	Getting away from family of origin and from wife's family. Being independent of family. Being independent.  Sense of new beginning in this – 'just you and me now' –

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love and who loved him back.  Feeling he and his wife were a team.		else, which she did and so by the time I'd got back, we'd got this 2 bedroom flat above a row of shops in Carter Green which was, it was great if I'm honest. it was, it was em, coming home and it was like 'wow, this is just me and you now'.	leaving behind the family. Again 'if I'm honest' – is it okay to be honest and say I was pleased to be out of the in laws' house?
	169.	R: You've used the word 'great' a couple of times to describe that period in your relationship. I'm wondering what happened going forward.	
Feeling out of place in his wife's close family. Finding the closeness of his wife's family difficult.  Feeling different from other people.	170.	J: I think, going forward, em, I was never, you know, I was, Amber's family were always very close, she was very family orientated and everything else, so a lot of, her family did get together, which was quite nice, but because my family didn't get together I always felt a little bit out of place sometimes. Em...	Sense of being different again – he wasn't brought up in that way. Something he longed for and yet felt he didn't fit in?
	171.	R: Can you say a bit more about that James?	
Feeling like an outsider in his wife's family.  Feeling ashamed of his family.  It was impossible to connect with his family.	172.	J: Em, it's, it's it's a bizarre thing that you see, you see one group of people doing one thing, and it's nice and everything else, and I suppose it's that (laughs) it's that embarrassment thing again whereas ....my mum and dad and my brothers we never got together and when we did go see my mum and dad, eh, having a conversation was like	Again, bizarre. His family's behavior is bizarre, different, abnormal.  Shame that my family are different. They aren't close.  Being with his family is like a trip to the dentist? Painful but necessary?

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		pulling teeth (mm) so you've got this group of people who're like 'hi, how are you, blah, blah blah' and this group of people 'alright? Alright. Like a drink? Yes please'.	
	173.	R: So what was that like, going into Amber's ....	
<p>Preferring time alone to time with his wife's family.</p> <p>Not being understood by his wife.</p> <p>Denying his freedom to choose for himself.</p>	174.	J: In some ways it's nice but in some ways it's awkward because again, there were times when I just wanted a bit of time out (mmm) and she couldn't necessarily get her heard round the fact that I just, you know, 'we're going to my mums' and I was like 'we're going to your mums, nah, I'm alright here'...'No I've told them you're coming'....Okay, I've got no choice now, I've got to go to your mum's.	<p>Mixed feelings. Want the closeness but find it claustrophobic.</p> <p>Wanted time out...time alone. This wasn't what was expected of him by his wife.</p> <p>Time out from what? Relatedness?</p> <p>Have to do what his wife asks. Can't make his own choice.</p>
	175.	R: And you're relating that very much back to what you were used to with the family?	
	176.	J: Yes...	
	177.	R: Do you think that changed, stayed the same or what, as a result of what you experienced, that need, or the feelings you've just described?	
<p>Feeling a need for time on his own.</p> <p>Not expressing his</p>	178.	J: I think, as time went by, over the years that we were together, there were times where I just needed some time alone, for one reason or another, em, I was never, again,	<p>Needing time alone (could be lots of reasons why) but not being able to ask for his needs to be met. Building something up inside him until it burst out in fits of anger/rage – 'came to a head'. Sense of inevitability</p>

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<p>feelings meant they built up inside him.</p> <p>His feelings would build up inside him until they exploded.</p> <p>Anger and rage relieved the pressure of his unexpressed feelings.</p> <p>He felt like a freak in the eyes of his partner.</p> <p>Feeling judged by his partner.</p> <p>Feeling ashamed of his anger and rage.</p> <p>Choosing to leave the Navy meant loss of a family he had felt part of.</p> <p>Joining the Prison Service to provide himself with a sense of belonging</p>		<p>very good at eh, expressing how I really feel, felt, until it came to a head, which it invariably did, it was a, fit of rage, anger, you know, real fits of anger, outbursts everything else, then we're getting to that bit where, you know, I'm guilty, I feel guilty for what I've displayed and everything else, and I'm sure that Amber was just like 'pew' this is, you know, this freaks me out when this happens, I don't really like it, all the rest of it (mmm). Em, and I, I came out the Navy in 85, which, em, felt the right thing to do because I wanted to stay with the family and everything else, but it was trying to leave behind a life that I actually quite liked, em, so I joined the prison service. And the initial training actually suited our relationship, because we'd grown together through this bit of 'you're here, you're away, you're here, you're away'. So, eh, being away at a training course was quite the norm, it was nice coming back for the weekends, going away...em. And I suppose the real pressure came on once all that training had been done.</p>	<p>about this process.</p> <p>Anger 'bursts' out in 'fits' – sense of explosion, being out of control, coming out of the blue. And sense of illness – seizures.</p> <p>Shame at outbursts of anger.</p> <p>Freaking out his partner – not normal behavior?</p> <p>Again joining a 'service' – a family, a group with its own identity and cohesion?</p> <p>Alone time while training kept the pressure down and prevented explosions?</p>
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Time away from home allowed both he and his partner room to grow.  Being with his wife all the time made him feel under pressure.			
	179.	R: So that pattern you'd had in the Navy of going away and coming back suited the relationship....	
Needing time alone.  Feeling unable to create time alone for himself – had to come through his job.	180.	J: Em, I don't really know, I couldn't put my finger on it Sue, but I suppose it was the fact that it gave us each, or certainly it gave me, that, em, me, alone time and that wasn't, that wasn't to, em, be unfaithful or anything like that, it just gave me that time that was mine.	Importance of having time that was his. This time was 'given' to him by circumstances of his job. He didn't ask for it/take it. Unable to do so?
	181.	R: Em, it's slightly not where we're at, but I'm wondering if Amber would have described...would have said you'd changed any as a result of the Falklands' experience, would she have...	
Anniversaries of key events in the Navy were difficult for his wife.	182.	J: Em, she was certainly, em, she, em, May she didn't particularly like and, eh, New Year, in the initial stages, was always difficult	She didn't like a time of year....not that she didn't like him or his behavior? Lots of fillers and hesitation – sense of shame.
	183.	R: You mean May every year...	
	184.	J: Every year, and then December every year	

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	185.	R: Okay, tell me why, what..	
Anniversary of the ship being hit brings up difficult emotions.  Reflecting on special times with his Navy 'brothers' brings up difficult emotions.	186.	J: May is obviously when we were, em were hit (mmm) and then, eh, December was, em when we were on the Sheffield we were away, obviously over New Year and Christmas so there was a lot of, em, good memories around, em, being at sea, you know, that, spending that time as a group of guys if you like, young guys, em, that Christmas period always seemed quite special.	Anniversaries.  Like memories of family times – special Christmas and New Year times.  Special time with his Naval family.
	187.	R: So what would happen at those times of years..	
Wanting to be honest and open about things.  Drinking to help him deal with memories and the difficult emotions they evoke.  Drinking changed his behavior towards those around him.	188.	J: I mean we did a sod's opera, em, well Christmas, em, Christmas would be fine, New Year would be a bit... it could either go good or it could go bad....depending on how much I drank if I'm honest.	The amount he drank influenced if the New Year was a good one or a bad one.
	189.	R: And what would happen if you drank...	
Feeling out of control of how much he drank.	190.	J: Em, I'd never monitor it, I'd just drink and drink and before I knew it I'd probably go to the bit where I'd start getting wound up with	A spiral....getting wound up. Sense of tensing like a spring? The emotion vented by falling out was what was

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<p>Feeling like his anger had come out of nowhere.</p> <p>Experiencing his anger as a dangerous and out of his control.</p> <p>Feeling out of control of what happened after he expressed his anger.</p>		<p>something, getting angry with something and then into that whole spiral again of falling out with people, for no reason in particular. And again there might be something genuine or it might just be that undercurrent of actually I just don't really flipping like New Year (right).</p>	<p>important, not about the reason they fell out. Falling out with people allowed emotion to be expressed. Undercurrent – something that is not expressed but can be sensed or felt. Water that pulls you under – you drown.</p>
	191.	<p>R: So....you seem to be saying the arguments weren't really necessarily about...it was about something else...</p>	
<p>Honesty and openness feels important now.</p> <p>Feeling ashamed of his family's lack of closeness.</p>	192.	<p>J: Yep, it was, you know, it was, em, I, for me, if I'm honest, it was probably the fact that Christmas is stressful, em, and there was always that bit where her mum and dad are getting together and eh, we don't do anything this side.</p>	<p>Being honest...</p> <p>Shame at how his family is 'different' – abnormal some how.</p>
	193.	<p>R: How was that for you?</p>	
<p>Feeling ashamed that his family don't appear to love him.</p>	194.	<p>J: For me? Em, I suppose it goes back to that little bit of embarrassment in terms of it looks as if 'oh there's lots of openness, nurturing, caring and everything else and then over there there's not a massive amount at all' (mm)</p>	<p>Not good enough? Sense of his family not being good enough. Not normal.</p> <p>Sense of what he missed out on.</p>
	195.	<p>R: You see them as opposite ends of the</p>	

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		spectrum (he has indicated this by spreading his arms widely)	
His wife's upbringing highlighted the abnormality of his own.	196.	J: Polar ends of the spectrum, yes Sue, but, and yeh, that's just based around what I knew, what I grew up with, obviously what Amber knew and what she grew up with (mm)	Sense of being different from his wife...having different understandings of family. Not being on the same page.
	197.	R: So in terms of the May time, you said Amber probably didn't like May or New Year very much...	
His way of relating to his wife changed as the anniversary of the ship being hit approached.  He became less present with his wife and more preoccupied as the anniversary of the ship being hit approached.	198.	J: May was always, em, you know, coming up to May the 4th and everything else was always, was always a big distraction and, em, I, I probably knew I changed but I wasn't consciously making an effort to change....	Change around the time of anniversaries.  Not something he was aware of at the time or doing consciously. A distraction from what? Distraction from his life with his wife? He was absent in some way during this time?
	199.	R: What way did you change do you think?	
He felt angry and chose to isolate himself from his wife.  He stopped communicating with his	200.	J: Probably became a bit more moody, bit more sullen, eh, withdrew into myself, didn't want to really talk to anybody (mmm). Em, you know, em, got into this bit where nobody really understood, probably, I'm not going to talk to anybody cos you don't really	Withdrawal into self. Not wanting contact with others. Sounds like a teenager! Sense that no one understood his experiences/what he was feeling. You can't understand so get away from me.



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<p>wife.</p> <p>He chose to isolate himself from everyone. He stopped communicating with anyone.</p> <p>He felt alone – that no one understood what he was feeling.</p> <p>He felt unable to risk revealing himself to his wife.</p>		<p>understand so....just leave me the hell alone.</p>	
	201.	R: So how did Amber deal with it, how did it impact on your...	
<p>He hasn't considered the impact he had on his wife up until now.</p> <p>Neither he nor his wife acknowledged the difficult emotions they were experiencing.</p> <p>He was fragile, cracked, ready to break.</p>	202.	<p>J: I think she just got on with doing whatever...I think it was for her, and I never really asked her, which probably, which probably sums it up, I think she probably spent that month walking on eggshells (okay)....and carrying on as normal.</p>	<p>Again, not confronted by either him or his wife? Walking on eggshells – trying not to break any/cause an explosion?</p>

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Getting close to each other felt unsafe so they kept their distance.			
	203.	R: And by 'walking on eggshells' you mean?	
His wife didn't know how to respond to his behaviour.  His feelings were dangerous and destructive.	204.	J: Probably thinking about 'what do I say, what do I not say' you know, what's, I suppose, what's the trigger that's going to set the grenade off here (right) or are we going to have a month where it doesn't explode this year (mmm).	Again, sense of explosion being possible any second....trigger, grenade, explosion.... His wife's finger was on the trigger.
	205.	R: Okay....I think right back at the beginning when we started talking you described Amber as your first wife....	
	206.	J: Yeh	
	207.	R: So I'm taking it from that that you're no longer married and (no) and can you say anything about whether you feel there was any link between the break up and your ...what you experienced?	
His experience of active service isolated him from his wife.  His experience of active	208.	J: I think there's a massive link if I'm honest Sue. In terms of, em, we, we, you know, 7 years into the marriage it was, you know, it was evident that we were starting to go apart, eh, grow apart, em but there wasn't	Active service linked to breakup of his marriage. Moving away from each other but no ability to come together again. He said earlier he didn't show his feelings if he didn't want to do something – he went along with it. Yet here

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<p>service made him behave in an uncompromising way in his relationship.</p> <p>His experience of active service made it more difficult for him to take into account the needs of his wife when making decisions.</p> <p>His experience of active service made him seek out time away from home.</p> <p>He wanted to be away from his wife more than is normal.</p> <p>He was seeking to understand his way of being in relationship with his wife.</p> <p>He wanted to understand who he was and where he came from.</p>	<p>that ability to bring everything back together in a, I suppose what you'd call a compromised way, because, in that 7 years there had never been really any compromise. You know, if I'm going to do something I'm going to do it, this is going to be the way it is and everything else (mmm). Em...that's how I was, yeah, once I'd made my mind up that I was going to do something, I would do it (okay), you know like, for argument's sake, I did a lot of camps for the Duke of Edinburgh's awards scheme, I was probably away with the prison service more than most people in the prison service, em, but I, I suppose I enjoyed that freedom of just being away away (uh huh). By 7 years, we'd got, I'd got a son and a daughter and I suppose I was, certainly from my point of view, I was realising that I wasn't very good in this relationship but I didn't know why I wasn't very good in this relationship (em). I tried, I was trying to work out all sorts of things, not about us, about me, where I was, where I wasn't and everything else, because, it was around that period where... was it 2 or 3 years afterward, that, em, my granddad, my mum's dad had become really ill and passed</p>	<p>he says no compromise. Does he mean he didn't say he didn't want to do something but rather demonstrated it in other ways? Explosion down the line? Made his mind to do things – and did them. No consultation/compromise. Sought out opportunities to get away – freedom in being away.</p> <p>Trying to work out who he was and where he was. Another life event resulting in him examining his identity? If he wasn't very good in this relationship then he was bad?</p> <p>A chance to find out about me and who I am. Discovery – like discovering a new land?</p> <p>Wanting Amber to understand and come on the journey with him? Help to answer questions about himself.</p>
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<p>He wanted his wife to join him on his voyage of self discovery.</p> <p>He had unanswered questions about who he was and where he came from.</p> <p>He had the opportunity to develop an identity outside of and separate from his mum.</p> <p>He was excited at the possibility of connecting with a new family.</p> <p>He was excited at the possibility of being part of a new family.</p> <p>His inability to consider the needs of his wife destroyed their relationship.</p> <p>He wanted to create a new</p>	<p>away (right). But what he'd done was he'd left me, em, a load of letters from my biological dad's side of the family (right). So, em, for me now, there was a really opportunity to actually start to discover a part of my life that no one's ever actually explained to me (okay). And I was trying to get that across to Amber, and I know that she probably saw that as a threat and I was trying to say to her, you know, this is a good thing, this might actually help to answer some questions (right) em, yep, cos what I did, I actually wrote back to my dad's sister in Tonga, you know, just to say, you know, I'm here and I've got these letters from, me, from me grandad, and I just thought I'd write out of the blue and everything else (mmm). Eh, not after anything, and it started a correspondence then between me and my, ehm my auntie and, eh you know, for me it was an exciting time because all of a sudden I've got this connection now with somebody that nobody's ever told me about and, you can't, nobody can sort of, my mum can't influence it or anything else now because I'm talking directly to this person. And, it had got to the point where in 94...93, em, we'd</p>	<p>Excited to have a connection to a new family. Maybe it will be the family he has wanted to have? His existing family can't get involved/change/spoil? It.</p> <p>Life as a journey. Can be interrupted, has destinations that you should try to tick off/get to, lands that can be discovered.</p> <p>Finding an identity of his own, separate from his mum and dad, and her mum and dad but something his wife would see – she would see him as he really was?</p> <p>If you see me as I really am we will be able to come back together...</p> <p>Lead instead to the confirmation of the 'death' of the marriage. Nail in the coffin.</p>
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family with his biological family and his wife and children, leaving behind his old family and her family.  He values emotional honesty.		agreed as a family we'd take a, we would take a family trip and we'd go back to Tonga. Amber, the children, we'd all go back and everything else (okay). Em, I suppose for me it was, selfish, for me, it was part of the journey of my life, but I was hoping this would be the opportunity where she would be there when I found out about me, and it would be away from her mum and dad, away from my mum and dad, and this would be the thing that would actually, could potentially, bring the 5 years of doing apart back together again. But if I'm honest it was the bit that finally, finally put the nail in the coffin for us, cos going back to what I said originally, you know, I'd obviously got it in my head, you know, that's what I want to do (right). Eh, it was all planned for October and then in, eh, I think it was june/July, em, Amber decided that she didn't want to go. So.....	
	209.	R: And you said, you said that the breakup of your relationship had everything to do with, or a lot to do with your experiences (yep). So I'm wondering if you can bring in where that links with what you're telling me now?	
The ship's company as a	210.	J: There was a bit...again...I've ...I always felt	Searching for words to explain. Search for himself?

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<p>family.</p> <p>The Navy helped him in his process of 'becoming'.</p> <p>He experienced a spiritual connection with his shipmates.</p> <p>His shipmates were like brothers.</p> <p>Being on the ship felt like growing up in a close, loving family.</p> <p>Only those who experienced the closeness with shipmates can know what it feels like.</p> <p>Unbreakable bonds between shipmates.</p> <p>When the ship exploded, the family he was part of was torn apart.</p>	<p>that I didn't really...the bits that I knew about myself was when I was in the Navy. And I was in....em....that ship's company on the Sheffield was my family and it's probably part of the reason that I joined the Navy was to get that real bond, the same as I experienced by joining the sea cadets (mm). I mean, my mates...it was a real bond, it was a real coming together of people (mm). Em, and that's what I got when I was on the, em, Sheffield, because, when I joined at, let's have a think, when did I join? 80...So I was 17 when I joined (yeah), had my 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> birthday on the ship with these guys, and we'd all had 17 and 18<sup>th</sup>, we'd all had 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> birthdays so we were all growing together, em, so there's that real, real, real feeling of camaraderie, whatever you want to call it. I think it, you know, if you ever get there and you experience it, you'll, everybody knows exactly what it's like (okay). Em, and obviously, I think, em, in 84...in 82 rather, that 4<sup>th</sup> May event, people see that as the bit that cemented everybody together. What they don't understand is that we were well together before then (okay). The impact that it had for me was the fact that I never</p>	<p>Who he was? What he knew about himself he learnt from being in the Navy. He got in touch with who he really was in the Navy?</p> <p>Navy as a family, with family bonds – part of why he joined the Navy was longing for this bond. 'Coming together of people' – like family gatherings?</p> <p>Growing up within this family – celebrating birthdays.</p> <p>Feeling of being together.</p> <p>You can't understand what it feels like unless you experience it. People don't get it/don't understand.</p> <p>Cemented together – solid, like concrete, unbreakable?</p> <p>No closure...didn't get to say goodbye, as a family. Didn't get together as a family to mourn, just like he didn't get together as a family in his childhood years? Was kept away from his brother's funeral/death. Important to have whole 'family' together. Wanting his wife to understand a bit of what it was like. Hoping for this understanding and yet not believing it was possible?</p> <p>Coming together – moving apart – coming together.....</p>
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<p>Loss of the sense of being part of a cohesive family.</p> <p>Family of shipmates didn't get the chance to grieve together.</p> <p>He was left alone with his grief after the ship went down.</p> <p>Wanting his wife to understand his experiences of active service.</p> <p>Recognising his partner cannot ever truly understand his experience.</p> <p>Feeling part of a group that understands what he experienced.</p>		<p>said farewell properly to a lot of people (mm). Because we ne...although there's been reunions and all....all...there's been bits where we've come back together again, em, we've never collectively as a group that survived been together, all together, to say you know, farewell (mm). Em, you know I can remember...there was a memorial service early on. Eh, I think it was the summer of 82 or 83, that Amber and I went to...yeah...and part of me...part of it was obviously for me to go and see the guys but again I was hoping that by her experiencing it she'd understand a little bit of what it was like in terms ....you can describe something but I think the only time you really experience it is when you witness it (mm). You know and it's just that ....coming together.</p>	
	211.	R: So Amber decided not to go to...	
Feeling physically and emotionally estranged	212.	J: Nope and I suppose what made it worse if I'm honest Sue is that we, by the point that	Sense he didn't consult/take his wife along with him on the decision to make this journey?

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from his wife.  Loneliness while being in the world with an Other.		we'd got to deciding we're going to Tonga, we've probably spent the last 18 months sleeping in separate rooms like two old people, so, it was, to all intents and purposes quite a...were we staying together just for the kids, were we staying together for...I don't know...	'Like two old people' – sense of life as a journey through time/importance of age. No intimacy. Not together. Reached old age ahead of time.
	213.	R: Would anything have been different if you hadn't been in the Falklands?	
Active service kept him angry for longer.  Struggling to live with the unknown.  Seeking meaning in his experiences of active service.  Seeking to understand his experiences.	214.	J: I think, I think the Falklands probably kept me angry for a lot longer than I, than I should have been, or could have been (okay). And I think that the other bit is that, em, it's always been in there in my mind and everything else, but I've never actually got a clear answer, I never had a clear handle on it, I never understood it...	Active service and anger. Anger and death of a relationship. 'Kept me angry' – held me in one place. Stopped me moving forward?  Something he hasn't been able to understand/no clear answer. Handle on it – couldn't open the door?
	215.	R: And when you say it, what do you mean...	
Seeking personal meaning in his experience of active service.  Struggling to understand the impact of his	216.	J: The impact and the experience, and putting it in some real context. Em....I never shared it with her, I never sat down and tried to explain it, I never tried to...and you, even to this day I find, you know, and again, I'm better than I was, but part of it is, always	Making sense of the experience didn't happen – didn't bring meaning to it? Didn't share it because I didn't understand it. 'Even to this day' ....again a sense of his life as a story. An 'event' needed as catalyst to him saying how he feels. Needs a justification beyond what he felt he had



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<p>experiences</p> <p>Struggling to share his experiences with his partner.</p> <p>Fearing he would be judged by his partner.</p> <p>Wanting to share his feelings with his partner but not being able to.</p> <p>Not feeling he wanted to share his feelings with his partner.</p> <p>Storing up his feelings until something forced them out.</p> <p>The man's role as protector means he shouldn't show emotions. Big boys don't cry. It's not manly to need emotional support.</p>		<p>about the fact that 'you're going to think I'm nuts if I tell you this so I won't tell you' but I'll wait for an event to occur and then I'll tell you. So, something will happen, and then it will all come out rather than actually 'i need to tell you this, I need to tell you how I'm feeling' (hmmm). Em, but you know, don't judge me, I just, I want to share what I'm feeling. Where as, when I was with Amber, that sort of thing wouldn't, I never got to the point where I want to do that, I keep it all inside (okay). You know, I suppose, knowing that I've seen you today, I actually, was trying to put it in some context and it, it sounds crude, but I suppose in my own head it was still the old hunter-gatherer mentality.</p>	<p>before he can share.</p> <p>Am I nuts? Am I going to be judged? I want to share what I feel but I'm scared.</p> <p>Keep it all inside – there's inside of him and outside of him. Two different worlds. Don't let people into inner world.</p> <p>Evolution? Being a man means hunting and not sharing feelings? Sense of what a man is.</p>
	217.	R: Tell me more, tell me what you mean?	

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The man's role in a relationship is to protect his partner and keep her safe.	218.	J: Eh, in terms of the 'don't you worry, I'll look after everything, I'll make sure everything's sorted, I'll make sure everything's safe, don't you worry about anything (okay).	Role of a man is to keep women safe.
	219.	R: So that was a drive behind....	
The man's role is to protect his family.  Feeling he needed to be strong and keep going.	220.	J: Yep, yep, eh, I want to look after you, I want to make sure everything's alright, make sure that the kids are alright, these, are... I can do this (mmm)	I AM capable of keeping you safe. In a way he didn't keep his ship/shipmates safe? Does it hurt to lose the ship/colleagues because it makes him less of a man?
	221.	R: You're talking....I've got a picture...you know, of how things were with Amber and how the Falklands impacted on that, and I've got a sense, because you are talking about things being a bit different now, and I'm wondering if you could just say a little bit about how you think the experience in the Falklands has impacted on relationships since then?	
Feeling shame that he failed to protect his ship/shipmates.  Feeling his emotions are shameful and should be hidden from others.	222.	J: I think, fundamentally, Sue, eh, the, the Falklands, eh for me has been about...going back to that coming of the plane really, feeling embarrassed, so I'm not going to, I'm not going, I'm not going to share anything with you emotionally, or, anything, unless, until, for arguments sake, I'm like a bottle of	Shame? It's embarrassing that I came off the plane and not off my ship. I'm not going to share this with you as it's shameful/embarrassing. Popping like a cork from a bottle of champagne – exploding off with force?  Why does he have to tolerate things? Because he will

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<p>Letting his emotions build up inside him</p> <p>Feeling unworthy of having his needs met.</p> <p>Seeking to avoid taking responsibility for his feelings and behaviours.</p> <p>Exploding with anger.</p> <p>Using alcohol to disinhibit himself and allow his anger to surface.</p>		<p>champagne (okay). So there are...there is a lot of stuff going off, there are a lot of things that you're doing that really are annoying me (mmm) but I'm not going to say anything, I've got to tolerate that...I've got to tolerate that, until such point as you do something and its the opportunity for me now to just go 'bang' and invariably it's, it was, em, manipulated around alcohol (okay)</p>	<p>otherwise explode or because he needs to prove he is a man? Or something else?</p> <p>Does he feel he doesn't deserve to have his say in the relationships/have his needs met?</p> <p>Until 'you do something' – so it can be the fault of the other and he doesn't have to own the emotion/anger?</p> <p>Going 'bang' – again, it's about explosions of emotion.</p> <p>Manipulation of alcohol.</p>
	223.	R: And when you say 'manipulated around..'	
<p>Using alcohol to enable himself to express his anger.</p> <p>Creating situations where he can express his anger.</p>	224.	<p>J: In terms of, going out for a drink, blah blah blah, why are you looking at him? And it's like 'well I wasn't, I wasn't doing anything'. And I know that you, Amber, or whatever, wasn't doing anything, but it's now the opportunity for me to off load and have a go (mmm).</p>	<p>Using alcohol deliberately to disinhibit himself – to enable him to express emotions or at least anger.</p> <p>Knows his partner didn't do anything but takes the opportunity he has created to 'off load' – reduce a burden that he is carrying?</p>
	225.	R: And you, em, you're relating that to your experience in the Falklands?	
Using alcohol to help him	226.	J: Because, what, you know, for me, the	

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<p>cope with his emotions on his return.</p> <p>Feeling that nobody really understands what he experienced.</p> <p>Sense that he is different from ordinary people.</p> <p>Anger that others don't understand what he experienced.</p> <p>The more he drank, the more he was able to express his anger.</p> <p>The more he drank, the more angry he felt.</p> <p>Feeling others don't understand what he has seen and done.</p> <p>Wanting to feel the release of pent up anger.</p>		<p>biggest, em, the biggest thing when I got back - and I touched on it earlier a couple of times about spending that first period drunk and everything else (mmm), you know, and it, I ah, I used to look at, I'd go out, I'd go out, have a drink, see all these young people having a great time, talking about the Falk..., talking about the Falklands, cos it was obviously a key subject at the time (mmm) and I know they're all at university, they're all in industry, they're all at this, so you're talking about something you've not got a bloody clue about and you're really annoying me now (mm). So, as...if you can imagine, at point A, where I've had a couple of pints and that's starting to, that's in me mind now (mm), 4 or 5 pints down the line, it's really in my mind now and the more you talk about it the more you're really getting to annoy me (mm). Get to the other end of the spectrum, you've really had... you're having it now, because you really don't know what you're on about and, I've been there, this that and the other, and you...you're having it (mmm). And part of it was nothing to do with the fact that ....I just wanted to get angry about stuff .....</p>	<p>He'd see people from other walks of life and hear them talking about something he'd experienced. They don't have a clue because they were in other walks of life – not in the Navy, they didn't experience it. Sense that others were clueless, protected from the reality of life and death.</p> <p>Annoyed by others having an opinion when they were not there and can't possibly understand it.</p> <p>The more alcohol he has the more annoyed he is able to feel and the more he is able to express. 'The spectrum' – from sober to drunk but also from controlling to letting go of his anger?</p> <p>Use this as a chance to get rid of his anger.</p>
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	227.	R: And are you saying that continued in other relationships, then, after?	
<p>A pattern of bottling things up, drinking to enable his emotions to escape, then feeling shame and apologizing.</p> <p>Emotions are dangerous and destructive.</p> <p>Showing emotions is shameful.</p> <p>Seeking to isolate himself from his partner.</p>	228.	J: Yeah, that was the, the sequence of events was this bottle everything up, drink, lose...totally lose the plot, and then...do all the apologies, get embarrassed, blah blah blah. Or... the same as I did with Amber, when there wasn't drink involved, I just totally withdrew.....don't talk to me, just leave me alone.	<p>'Bottle everything up' – drinking metaphor. Contain everything at high pressure then explode.</p> <p>'Blah blah' – embarrassed at this?</p> <p>Shame over explosion of feelings.</p> <p>Alternative to exploding – withdrawing.</p>
	229.	R: Is that what you mean by 'withdrew'?	
<p>Seeking to withdraw from the social world.</p> <p>Seeking to withhold his thoughts and feelings from his partner.</p>	230.	J: Yeah, I, withdrawing for me is shutting down...we'll have a conversation but, yep, no, whatever...that's all you're going to get from me...	<p>'Shutting down' – not feeling? As an alternative to exploding? Not giving anything to others...</p>
	231.	R: Okay, so what's going on inside you when .... When you're shut down?	
Struggling to understand his behaviours.	232.	J: It's part....it's part of me, where I'm...I sort of try to work out where I am, and work out try to do stuff. I won't confront stuff straight	<p>Withdrawing is part of him. In what sense? Is it a mode he gets into like a machine that switches off to cool down, get a rest, have maintenance done?</p>

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<p>Needing time alone to process his thoughts and emotions.</p> <p>Seeking ways to manage his emotions.</p> <p>Failing to find a strategy for dealing with his emotions that works.</p> <p>Emotions damage people.</p> <p>Seeking to protecting his partner from his emotions.</p>		<p>away, I'll try and work out a strategy or something or I'll this that and the other. I won't just go to you 'you're really annoying me now' (mm). It's, it's this bit of 'I don't want to upset you, I don't want to do this, so I'll , I'll actually keep it to myself. By keeping it to myself, I probably am upsetting you... (okay)</p>	<p>Trying to 'work out me' – he doesn't understand himself.</p> <p>Trying to manage the outburst of emotion. Fear of exploding and its consequences? Not wanting to upset others with something they won't understand and won't be able to cope with?</p> <p>Keep it to myself – won't share it.</p> <p>Recognises the fact his strategy doesn't succeed in achieving its aims. Sense he is powerless to change it?</p>
	233.	R: So, eh...are you in a relationship now?	
	234.	J: Yep, I am....	
	235.	R: And, how do you see that being impacted...	
<p>Seeking to share his experiences.</p> <p>Feeling anxious as he remembers his early family life.</p> <p>Physical manifestations of</p>	236.	<p>J: Phew....(laughs) it, it, I'll share something with you Sue, and I don't mind sharing it with you, em, Christmas Eve, we went to the Crooked Spire. Now we went to the Crooked Spire last year, so to all intents and purposes we are doing something that we did 12 months ago (yep) and there was nothing wrong. Em...we sat in the same place .... but</p>	<p>Laughs and gives the impression to me that the impact continues in current relationships.</p> <p>Unpredictability?</p> <p>Illustrates how he continues to have his behavior and therefore his relationships impacted upon by active service through a more recent story.</p> <p>Sense of his feelings coming out of the blue – even though it was okay last year, this year it made me feel</p>

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<p>anxiety.</p> <p>A need to escape and get some space.</p> <p>Having a medical term for his feelings helps him understand them.</p> <p>Withholding his feelings from his partner.</p> <p>Feeling unable to express his needs.</p> <p>Feeling compelled to do what his partner wants.</p> <p>Suppressed anger triggered by the behavior of an Other.</p> <p>Wanting to fight as a means of releasing the pressure of his anger. Partner vigilant as to his mood.</p>	<p>this year, as we sat in the same place, for some reason, I keep looking at the left...the left hand side. And eh, that's where we used to sit as kids, so, I'm there...and in my head I'm seeing my mum, four kids, sat over there .... So we get to the point where you can go for communion and at this point, now I'm like hot and sweaty. Now, I know that that's anxiety, so I'm like 'I need to go and get some fresh air now'. So I go out to the back of the church, get some fresh air, Amber's, em, Amber's gone for communion, she comes back, I rejoin her and, em, it's like 'you..' 'Yep, I'm alright, yep, just needed some fresh air, yep'. So we'd then got to go to, em, see her daughter who works in a bar. So the smart thing now, would be to go '.....tell you what, you go and see your daughter and I'll just wait here for you'. But me being me, oh no, I can't upset her, I've got to go with you now to see your daughter (mm). So we go into the bar, see her daugh..., and the bar, the bar's packed. The first thing that happens is, something hits me on the back of the head, just walking in...hits me on the back of the head...totally from nowhere (mm). I'm now...(clenches fists) phew....right...that's</p>	<p>this...</p> <p>Link to past memories and panic?</p> <p>Anxiety – names his feeling and I get a sense it is a medical term for him, rather than a feeling. Diagnosis helped him make sense of things/express feelings/recognise them?</p> <p>Still not expressing his needs...still not wanting to upset his partner. But he is ready to explode. If he isn't smart he is stupid? Feels bad about what he does?</p> <p>Something happens to trigger an outburst? Using short sentences, missing words, sense of rapid build up of emotion/ tension.</p> <p>Partner spots his agitation. He snaps. Uses the term 'bang' again – an explosion. Aware he has caused upset.</p> <p>Done 'the wrong thing' – shame again?</p> <p>Inability to make things right – to bring them back together? So hides from it/hopes it will sort itself out? (He puts his head in his hands when describing what he is thinking on getting home.)</p>
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<p>Feeling ashamed of his behavior.</p> <p>Feeling the need to make up for his behavior.</p> <p>Trying to avoid confronting his behavior.</p> <p>Avoiding confrontation with his partner.</p> <p>Denying his freedom to choose otherwise.</p> <p>Finding it difficult to ask for his needs to be met by his partner.</p>		<p>it....(okay). Amber obviously spots I'm beginning to...get a bit agitated...eh, and she went 'oh we'll go now...'. Em...and she said something else, and I just snapped at her, totally snapped at her - bang - 'what are you doing br br br br'. At which point she went 'we're going', em ...so we've gone, I know I've upset her .....we get home and I'm thinking, I know...I know I've done the wrong thing here, I really have done a wrong thing.....but I don't know how to make it right. So instead of saying something, like, before we go to sleep or anything else....if we go to sleep, it will be alright in the morning....Of course it's not alright in the morning, but in the morning, I say to her, I ..., look I know, I'm really sorry...I, I know it was wrong last night. And she says 'well why didn't you say something last night, why didn't you not go the bar, why didn't you....' and I'm like 'because....in my head, I've got to do what you want me to do (right). I'm, I'm still not at that point where I go 'this isn't right for me' (right) 'I need to step....I need to do something over here... (right)</p>	<p>Needing time to work out what he's feeling? Not able to connect with his own needs at the time?</p> <p>Still struggling to spot his own needs and meet them/ask for others to meet them.</p>
	237.	R: And would that have been different or the same had you had different experiences ...or	



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		not had the active service?	
<p>Active service increased an anger he already felt.</p> <p>Anger at the throwness of life.</p> <p>Early family experience made his less likely to share his feelings about active service.</p> <p>Feeling compassion for what his younger self experienced.</p> <p>Recognition that his experiences are out of the ordinary.</p> <p>Ongoing exposure to attack once he left the Navy.</p> <p>Choosing to hide his emotions.</p> <p>Recognising now that</p>	238.	<p>J: It, it, it's the act....if...active service has, em, it's created a lot of things in terms of, em, the way I behave about....I'm probably more...I was already an angry young man (okay)....what happened in 82 made me more angry...I come from a background that isn't massively emotive (mm) so, what happened in 82, I'm not going to tell anybody about. But that's a massive event, experiencing something like that, isn't it, as a 19 year old (mm)...em, to then join the prison service where you deal with things like that on a daily basis, but I never tell you about it, so I'm going to bottle all this and keep it all bottled up and tucked away (mm). Em....at some point, it's got to come out, em, and that's what happened 2 or 3 years ago (mm?) if im honest...</p>	<p>Struggling to express what he wants to here...which seems to be something around the exacerbating effect of active service on his anger. Anger that already existed in him as a result of his upbringing. Because of his background he couldn't express his emotions about what happened to him in 82. 'Isn't it?' – wants my agreement. Compassion for his younger self? 'Massive event'. Event gives the sense of things 'out of the ordinary' e.g. not part of normal life. Again he is bottling things up – containing them. Tucked away – out of sight, contained, hidden. Inevitability of the emotion coming out – recognition it can't stay inside him.</p>

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emotions need to be expressed.			
	239.	R: Is it changing in any way, do you think....?	
<p>New ability to share his emotions with others.</p> <p>Sharing his emotions requires trust in the other person.</p> <p>Able to disclose himself without using alcohol now.</p> <p>Finding alternative ways to express his anger.</p>	240.	J: It, it's changing because I know that I'm capable of talking to people now (mm). It's just getting that confidence to do it. It's changing because I can talk about things now without wanting to go out and get drunk and then find a fight (okay)...	<p>Recognises he is capable of talking to people but needs to become more confident to do so.</p> <p>Now no longer needs to use drink and fighting to help him express things.</p>
	241.	R: So what's changed....em....that's allowed that...	
<p>Defining moments in your life change you.</p> <p>Feeling he must carry on as normal, no matter what.</p> <p>Recognising his behavior</p>	242.	J: Em, the significant event was my biological dad's death (right) and I went to his funeral and I...went back to work, as you do....as I do rather (laughs). So I was back at work following day, em, cos I'd gone down to London for 4 days, 4 or 5 days, had the funeral, went back to work on the Friday, weekend off, went back to work, and it was	<p>He sees life as having a series of significant events that set your direction or influence your direction going forwards.</p> <p>'As I do' – not normal reaction. Hiding away emotions again.</p> <p>Difficult to explain what he felt...couldn't put it into</p>

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<p>might not be normal.</p> <p>Reaching a point where he realizes it's time to get help.</p> <p>Recognising he doesn't feel able to continue without help.</p> <p>Realising others are concerned about his wellbeing.</p> <p>Feeling a need to get help urgently.</p> <p>Feeling judged for needing medical help to deal with his feelings.</p> <p>Letting go of controlling his feelings and allowing others to take control.</p> <p>Wanting to be honest about his experiences.</p>		<p>got to about Wednesday and I, em, I said to my boss at the time, I said 'look, I'm not being funny but I just...I've phoned the doctor, I've got an appointment this afternoon, because I just don't feel 100 percent' (okay). So went to see the doctor saying 'look'....so I had a chat with him saying 'I feel alright but I don't feel alright, this that and the other'...eh, (laughs) at which point, after I'd spoken to him he went 'I'm signing you off work for 2 weeks'. Okay...no problem....a bit of time out might not be a bad thing Doc (mm). So I phoned my boss....I went 'eh...I'll be back in 2 weeks...' . He must of known something because he went 'no,no, no it's alright, don't rush, don't rush...'. 'No, no, I've got a note for 2 weeks, I'll be back in 2 weeks, em, he then found me an appointment with eh, the NHS, to see a mental health and welfare, eh, a mental health nurse...(mm)...em, I went to see this lady...she then referred me to, or she said she couldn't do anything for, I think she said about 6 to 8 weeks (right), but I could get help through the Veterans Mental Health and Welfare (mmm). So if I was prepared to do that, em, I'd get seen a lot sooner. So I was</p>	<p>words then and still struggled during our interview to describe it.</p> <p>'This that and the other'...again, struggling to say how he felt. He laughs a lot at this point too – embarrassed feeling?</p> <p>Time out from life. Withdrawing? Time to think? Time to work things out?</p> <p>His boss knew more about where he was at than he did?</p> <p>Sense of urgency in his situation that belies his matter of fact description of dates, what other people said, etc.</p> <p>Summarising things in this part of his story....rushing through it. Embarrassed? Wanting to forget this part of his narrative and move on?</p> <p>Appearing in public freaked him out? Sense of being seen as veteran of the war?</p>
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<p>Feeling overwhelmed by emotions on remembering his experiences.</p> <p>Acknowledging his experiences in public was difficult.</p>		<p>'right, okay, I'll do that...'. Went to the Veterans Mental Health and Welfare...em...initial appointments, all the rest of it....went back to see the doctor who went 'poof, I'm signing you off for 4 weeks now'....eh, and I ended up with....about 6 months off work, Sue, if I'm honest...(right). Em....then went to remembrance Sunday for the first time.....ever.....wore my medals in public for the first time.....ever.....em....that freaked me out...</p>	
	243.	R: What do you mean 'freaked you out'?	
<p>Difficult emotions when remembering his experiences.</p> <p>Finding it good to share his emotions with his partner.</p>	244.	<p>J: In terms of I couldn't cope with it, found it really difficult, eh, Amber was there, which was great, cos at least I shared that with her, em, I was able to share that bit with her...</p>	<p>Shared experience of the Remembrance Sunday with his partner and that was a good thing.</p>
	245.	R: What was that like....to have her...	
<p>Good to share his experiences with people he trusts.</p> <p>Being more connected with his experiences was overwhelming at times.</p>	246.	<p>J: It was, it was, it was nice because, eh, you know, by then we'd known each other 8 years....and her mum and dad came as well. And in that 8 year period we've probably got a really closer relationship with her mum and dad than, eh,(laughs) than my mum and dad after 50 years (right). Em, but then I....and</p>	<p>Sharing trauma he experienced with family? In a way he didn't get to share it with his first family, the family that he was brought up with. Laughs at this point but it feels like an ironic laugh...sadness. 50 years and still don't have the relationship I want with my parents. Freaking out – sense of it being 'not normal' – not coping is freaking out? Not coping is not normal?</p>

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Needing support while he processed his feelings about his experience.		again, something else happened, I think the week after, eh, that freaked me out a bit. Em...so I went back to see the Veterans Mental Health and then they ref...I basically stayed with them for 12 months (right) and got, eh discharged last November....November 14th...(okay)....	
	247.	R: And are you saying that that's had an impact on where you're at and how you're relationship's ...	
<p>Talking about his experiences and feelings helped.</p> <p>Life as a journey with places you visit.</p> <p>Active service as just one part of a whole life story so far.</p> <p>Sharing his emotions with his partner remains a challenge.</p> <p>Wanting to manage the way he is seen by his partner.</p>	248.	J: Yep, yeah, that opportunity to talk about the Falklands, talk about my brother, be honest about me and being angry about things, and being drunk and all the rest of it, em, has put me in a better place...I'm still got to come over the hurdle of, em, sharing a lot of...more with Amber, because there's still that bit of 'I don't want to seem nuts and I don't want to seem needy'. So I'm trying to work out what that balance is in terms of what you share....(right).....when you share it, how you share it and things like that (mm).	<p>The sense of his active service being part of the wider context of his life's experiences. Not a stand alone 'event' – something that has interacted with other events to make him who he is...to influence his behaviour.</p> <p>Better place – locations and state of being.</p> <p>Still barriers in place (hurdles to jump) in terms of sharing with his partner.</p> <p>It's not acceptable somehow to express your emotions – it makes you needy or nuts.</p> <p>About getting the right balance.</p>

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Sharing his feelings is something he needs to practice to get right.			
	249.	R: So how is it to be where you're at with it at the moment...?	
<p>Life as a journey with places you visit.</p> <p>Physical expressions of anxiety.</p> <p>Understands where his anxiety comes from now.</p> <p>Mental health label is reassuring.</p> <p>Feels more self-aware now.</p> <p>Life as a war you fight.</p> <p>No longer needs to drink to manage his feelings.</p>	250.	<p>J: Em, for me I think it's a, it's a good place in terms of...I've got a better understanding of where I am, you know....I still, you know....I still get anxious, very anxious, to the point of waking up, hot, sweaty, everything else, but I know where it...what's causing it (okay). em, i understand there are going to be certain things that trigger that anxiety, but i've, eh, you know, again, it's one of those things where I will....I'm more self aware of it, I will battle through it, but I won't go out and get drunk about it either, which is probably what I've...I have done in the past.</p>	<p>Didn't know where he was. Wasn't rooted somehow, unanchored? Now he recognizes his surroundings more? Recognises himself more and who he is? Anxiety still there but knows what is causing it. Anxiety a term that doesn't come up in his life story until he is describing events post his time off with PTSD. Sense of meaning to what he feels – It's anxiety'. Trigger – fires the gun. Able to recognise them now. More 'self-aware' infers he wasn't aware of his self previously? Or less so. Battle – fight analogy. Fits with trigger, explosion, etc. No longer needs drink to enable him to express his emotions.</p>
	251.	R: Right....and what's it like for you today, talking about what we've talked about....?	

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<p>Fear that full acknowledgement of his feelings will cause him to disintegrate</p> <p>Feelings of failure.</p> <p>Existential guilt at his failure to be true to his values.</p>	252.	<p>J: I'm comfortable talking to you about this...I'm comfortable about sharing it, em....you know, there are times in this conversation, I'm sure, where I have, probably been....appeared a little bit anxious and a bit...emotive...but I've tried n..., to keep it together a little bit as well, you know, because...again, when I got married I thought I'd be married for life....that's my, you know...I honestly did think that I was married for life (mm). Eh, you know....and I've been pretty successful at most things apart from being married and, you know, for me, being in a relationships so you know the thing I've not probably been successful at is the thing that's probably important to me.</p>	<p>Comfortable ....but feeling anxious or emotive (emotional?) isn't comfortable?</p> <p>Fear he won't 'keep it together' if he expresses his emotions.</p> <p>Failure at marriage/relationships. Important to succeed in this area but he hasn't been successful. This is the most important thing and he's failed.</p>
	253.	<p>R: So how is it for you to have not succeeded....</p>	
<p>Hopeful for future relationship success.</p> <p>Feeling distant from his family of origin.</p> <p>Feeling part of a close and extended family which he has created.</p>	254.	<p>J: Phew, it's a tough one if I'm honest, Sue. I think I w..., I think with the person I'm with now, I stand a greater success, chance of that...Whilst I'm not necessarily got that great a relationship with my mum and dad, I understand what our relationship's around, I've been fortunate enough to get a link with, eh, the Tongan side of the family (mm). Eh, got a really strong relationship with, eh, my</p>	<p>I have more chance now to succeed at my relationships. Understanding of not having what he wants from his parents and more acceptance of this being the case? Fortunate and chance – language of luck.</p>

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<p>Feeling his family of origin's behavior was not normal.</p> <p>Sadness over the loss of a close relationship with his parents.</p> <p>Feeling compassionate towards his younger self.</p> <p>Being shaped by what has happened to him.</p>		<p>dad's brother, em, he's got a strong relationship with, eh, my son and my daughter, my grandchildren (mm), so although my mum and my step dad haven't got that relationship with my daughter and, eh, with my, my son....and their families, I'm quite ....I see myself as being quite fortunate that, em, my Uncle, or, em, my dad's brother's got that relationship with them (mm) and even Amber's mum and dad have got a really nice relationship with em my son and my daughter and the grandkids (right). So....whilst I may have lost out a little bit with my mum and dad, I can't change that, I can't change eh, the things that have probably shaped that, but I'm fortunate that there's a, there's a bit that we've got ....(mmm)</p>	<p>Sense he now has the family and relationships that he wanted...though he acknowledges the sense of loss again that he as re his relationship with his parents.</p> <p>Sense that he's created what he wanted all along when he left home to join the Navy. Felt therefore we'd come round in a circle to some extent and could end our conversation.</p>
	255.	R: This may be a nice....positive point to end on....Thank you....	
	256.	J: No problem.....	

**Appendix 7: Initial Themes Emerging from James' Transcript**



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A number of themes appear at different times in the participant's journey. The same theme appears at each stage but the way in which it manifests in the participants' life, the way the participant experiences or understands it, its prominence or lack of prominence, varies.

	Before joining the Navy	Joining the Navy	Before Active Service	After Active Service	Now
Seeking a sense of self	<p>Feeling he didn't really matter to his family (154)</p> <p>He felt that having left the house to join the Navy he ceased to exist for his family (38)</p> <p>He felt that his parents didn't love him the way they should have done (42)</p> <p>He wasn't approved of by his parents (14)</p> <p>Sea Cadets gave him a sense of efficacy (16)</p> <p>Achievements in Sea</p>	The Navy as a profession (163)	The Navy helped him in his process of 'becoming' (207)	<p>Taking the opportunity to develop an identity outside of and separate from his mum (207)</p> <p>He wanted to understand who he was and where he came from (207)</p> <p>He had unanswered questions about who he was and where he came from (207)</p> <p>Feeling his parents didn't care if he was alive or dead (138)</p> <p>Hoping that his parents would recognise that he</p>	Feeling sad that he denied part of himself for so long (124)

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	<p>Cadets gave him a sense of pride (16)</p> <p>Pride in being different from those around him (20)</p> <p>Enjoying standing out from the crowd (28)</p> <p>Wanting to show others he was special (22)</p> <p>Pride in being part of something special (60)</p> <p>Gaining a sense of self through Sea Cadets (16)</p> <p>Seeking to exist in the eyes of others (22)</p> <p>Being in Sea Cadets helped him develop his own worth and value (26)</p> <p>He was seeking to establish his own values and worldview (24)</p>			<p>existed (138)</p> <p>Wanting his parents to demonstrate their love for him (140)</p>	
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	<p>He didn't have a solid sense of who he was (12)</p> <p>The experience announced him as an individual separate from his family (28)</p> <p>Wanting to be special, to stand out from the crowd (20)</p> <p>He was trying to get a more solid sense of who he was (24)</p>				
Seeking to escape	<p>He was desperate to escape his situation (18)</p> <p>He needed to be somewhere different (18)</p> <p>Fighting to escape the family in which he feels trapped (10)</p>	<p>Joining the Navy allowed him to leave the past behind (36)</p> <p>He wanted to get away/to go places (46)</p> <p>Joining the Navy felt like a new beginning (36)</p> <p>Leaving to join the Navy marked the end of childhood (34)</p>		<p>A need to escape and get some space (288)</p> <p>Feeling a need for time on his own (177)</p> <p>Being with his wife all the time made him feel under pressure (177)</p> <p>Needing time alone to process his thoughts and</p>	

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		Leaving to join the Navy marked the beginning of adulthood (34)		<p>emotions (229)</p> <p>Seeking to withdraw from the social world (227)</p> <p>Seeking to isolate himself from his partner (225)</p> <p>Feeling unable to create time alone for himself – had to come through his job (179)</p> <p>He became less present with his wife and more preoccupied as the anniversary of the ship being hit approached (197)</p> <p>He wanted to be away from his wife more than is normal (207)</p>	
Seeking to belong	<p>He was part of something much bigger in the Sea Cadets (26)</p> <p>He felt a sense of</p>	<p>The Navy offered him the potential to belong (10)</p> <p>He wanted both to belong to his family</p>	<p>He felt he belonged in the Navy (38)</p> <p>Sense of disconnection between him and his</p>	<p>Feeling part of a group that understands what he has experienced (207)</p>	<p>Feeling distant from his family of origin (306)</p>

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	<p>belonging in the Sea Cadets (26)</p> <p>Wanting to belong/be part of something (16)</p> <p>He was an outsider in his family – he didn't belong (12)</p> <p>Feeling isolated and unconnected to his family (154)</p> <p>Finding his family distant and uncommunicative</p>	<p>and to leave it behind forever (38)</p>	<p>family (112)</p>	<p>The ship's company as a family (207)</p> <p>He became resigned to feeling inconsequential to his parents (142)</p> <p>Feeling like an outsider in his wife's family (171)</p> <p>Joining the Prison Service to provide himself with a sense of belonging (177)</p> <p>Feeling separate and disconnected from his family (136)</p> <p>Wanting to feel at home, that he belonged somewhere (165)</p> <p>He was excited at the possibility of connecting with a new family (207)</p> <p>Feeling separate and disconnected from his family (136)</p> <p>Feeling he and his</p>	
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				wife were a team (167) Feeling he had someone to love and who loved him back (167) Seeking to connect with his girlfriend on his return (134) Feeling his wife was on his side against the world (167)	
Seeking meaning and direction	Loss of his brother fractured his worldview (10) Knowing where he was going reduced his anxiety about the future (8) He felt disengaged from everything around him (26)	The Navy offered the potential for meaning (10) Seeking a sense of direction (8)	The Navy gave him a sense of direction (18)		
Seeking freedom	He was excited about the possibilities the Sea Cadets gave him (18)	Joining the Navy gave him independence (36) The Navy offered freedom (10)	Being at sea gave him a sense of freedom (52) The Navy offered him the opportunity	Living with his wife's family felt constricting (167)	

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	Sea Cadets gave him the opportunity to experience freedom and independence (16)	Leaving the Navy felt final – there was no going back (38)	to escape ‘normal life’ (52)		
Seeking safety	Family life was unsafe and uncertain (12)			Preferring time alone to time with his wife’s family (173)	Feeling anxious as he remembers his early family life (288)
Seeking to be understood				<p>Anger that others don’t understand what he experienced (223)</p> <p>Not being understood by his wife (173)</p> <p>He felt alone – that no one understood what he was feeling (199)</p> <p>Feeling others misunderstand the nature of his experience of active service (108)</p> <p>Recognising his partner cannot ever truly understand his</p>	

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				<p>experience (207)</p> <p>Wanting his wife to understand his experiences of active service (207)</p> <p>Feeling others don't understand what he has seen and done (223)</p> <p>Only those who experienced the closeness with shipmates can know what it felt like (207)</p> <p>Feeling that nobody really understands what he experienced (223)</p>	
Feeling different and abnormal		He felt his parents' lack of emotions wasn't normal (40)		<p>Feeling out of place in his wife's close family (169)</p> <p>Finding the closeness of his wife's family difficult (169)</p> <p>His wife's</p>	<p>Feeling his family of origin's behavior was not normal (306)</p> <p>Recognition that his experiences are out of the ordinary (290)</p>



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				<p>upbringing highlighted the abnormality of his own (195)</p> <p>Feeling his parents' lack of emotion was not normal (140)</p> <p>Feeling ashamed of his family's lack of closeness (191)</p> <p>Feeling ashamed of his family (171)</p> <p>Feeling ashamed that his family don't appear to love him (193)</p> <p>Recognising that his behavior might not be normal (294)</p> <p>Awareness of being thrown into a family at random (154)</p>	
Feeling anger and rage	<p>Not being allowed to express his emotions made him want to explode with anger (12)</p> <p>He used anger as a</p>			<p>Feeling out of control of what happened after he expressed his anger (189)</p> <p>Anger and rage</p>	

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	<p>means to be heard (12)</p> <p>He used anger as a way of trying to blast through the façade of normality presented by his parents (12)</p>			<p>relieved the pressure of his unexpressed feelings (177)</p> <p>Creating situations where he can express his anger (221)</p> <p>Suppressed anger triggered by the behavior of an Other (288)</p> <p>Anger at the throwness of life (29)</p> <p>Active service kept him angry for longer (211)</p> <p>Feeling like his anger had come out of nowhere (189)</p> <p>Experiencing his anger as dangerous and out of control (189)</p> <p>Wanting to feel the release of pent up anger (223)</p>	
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Judgement and shame				<p>Feeling publicly shamed (132)</p> <p>He felt like a freak in the eyes of his partner (177)</p> <p>Feeling judged by his partner (177)</p> <p>Showing emotions is shameful (225)</p> <p>Feeling ashamed of his anger and rage (177)</p> <p>Fearing he would be judged by his partner (213)</p> <p>Trying to control his partner's construct of him (126)</p>	Feeling ashamed of his behavior (288)
The show must go on	<p>You had to cope in his family no matter what (42)</p> <p>The absurdity of his family's response to death was clear to him (12)</p> <p>Emotions were</p>			<p>Big boys don't cry (213)</p> <p>The man's role is to protect his family (217)</p> <p>It's not manly to need emotional support (213)</p>	

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	<p>unacceptable in his family so he learnt to hide them (42)</p> <p>He got the message that emotions were not acceptable (12)</p>			<p>The man's role in a relationship is to protect his partner and keep her safe (215)</p> <p>Feeling he must carry on as normal, no matter what (294)</p> <p>Feeling there is no choice but to carry on as if nothing has happened (136)</p> <p>He recognizes the absurdity of his parents' way of being in the world (40)</p> <p>Recognising the absurdity of his family's insistence on maintaining the façade of normality upon his return (136)</p> <p>Early family experience made him less likely to</p>	
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				<p>share his feelings about active service (290)</p> <p>Feeling he needed to be strong and keep going (217)</p>	
Drinking and fighting				<p>Using alcohol to help him cope with his emotions on his return (223)</p> <p>The more he drank, the more he was able to express his anger (223)</p> <p>Fighting as a way to release the pressure of feelings he felt unable to express (146)</p> <p>Using alcohol to enable himself to express his anger (221)</p> <p>Using alcohol to disinhibit himself and allow his anger to surface (219)</p> <p>Drinking to help hm</p>	

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				<p>deal with memories and the difficult emotions they evoke (187)</p> <p>Drinking changed his behaviour to those around him (187)</p> <p>Feeling out of control of how much he drank (189)</p> <p>Using alcohol deliberately to unblock his emotions (146)</p> <p>A pattern of bottling things up, drinking to enable his emotions to escape, then feeling shame and apologizing (225)</p> <p>The more he drank, the more angry he felt (223)</p> <p>Wanting to fight as a means of releasing the pressure of his</p>	
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				<p>anger (288)</p> <p>Fighting as a means of expressing his feelings (146)</p> <p>Getting drunk as a means of expressing his feelings (146)</p> <p>Drinking and fighting as a way of dealing with difficult emotions (126)</p> <p>Spending most of his time drunk when back from active service (102)</p>	
Anniversaries				<p>Anniversary of the ship being hit brings up difficult emotions (185)</p> <p>Anniversaries of key events in the Navy were difficult for his wife (181)</p>	

Appendiz 8: 61 themes emerging from the analysis of all interviews

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Participant	James	George	Tom	Greg	Paul	Dennis	Arthur	Ron	John
Meta-theme/Theme									
1. SEEKING A SENSE OF SELF									
1.1 Seeking a sense of self	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
1.2 Wanting to stand out from the crowd	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
1.3 Feeling disconnected from his family	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
1.4 Ship as home and shipmates as family	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
1.5 Having a strong sense of self (Tom)	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
1.6 Seeking control over his destiny (Tom)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
2. MEANING AND DIRECTION									
2.1 Seeking meaning and direction	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
2.2 Seeking to escape his family	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
2.3 Seeking freedom and independence	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.4 Relationships restrict your freedom	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
2.5 Seeking adventure (George)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.6 Trauma (George)	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
2.7 Not expecting trouble (George)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
2.8 Seeking personal growth (Tom)	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
2.9 Strong established relationship (Tom)	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
3. EXISTENTIAL CONFRONTATIONS									
3.1 Confronting his mortality	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.2 Confronting thrownness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.3 Confronting freedom and finitude	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
3.4 Confronting absurdity	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
4. OVERWHELMING EMOTIONS									
4.1 Anger and rage	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
4.2 Grief and loss	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
4.3 Failure and shame	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.4 Anxiety	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗

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4.5 Drinking and fighting to enable him to cope with difficult feelings	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
4.6 Drinking and fighting as a way to express his feelings	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
4.7 Feeling ashamed of his behaviour	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗
4.8 Verbal abuse (George)	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
4.9 Physical abuse (George)	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
4.10 Sleep problems (George)	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
4.11 Re-experiencing (George)	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
4.12 Going to a dark place (George)	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
4.13 The last straw – breaking down (George)	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	
5. WORLDVIEW									
5.1 The show must go on	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
5.2 Real men don't cry	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
5.3 Emotions are dangerous and destructive	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
5.4 Emotions are shameful	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
5.5 The reality of war (Greg)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
5.6 Active service changed him (Greg)	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6. SEEKING A RELATIONSHIP									
6.1 Wanting someone on his side	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
6.2 Seeking a solid home base	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
6.3 Seeking safety in a relationship	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
6.4 Jumping into a relationship (Greg)	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓
6.5 Wanting to be cared for (Paul)	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
6.6 Avoiding relationships (Arthur)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
6.7 Relationships are dangerous (Arthur)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
7. SELF AND OTHER									
7.1 Finding it difficult to compromise his needs for those of his partner/s	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
7.2 Feeling unable to ask his partner to meet his needs	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
7.3 Avoiding conflict (Dennis)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
8. ALIENATION									

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8.1 Feeling others could not understand	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8.2 Feeling judged by his partner	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
8.4 Feeling like an outsider	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
8.5 Feeling different from other people	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
9. WITHDRAWAL									
9.1 Withholding his feelings from his partner	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
9.2 Seeking to isolate himself from his partner	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
9.3 Seeking to escape the social world	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
9.4 Denying he needs help (George)	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
10. GROWTH AND RESILIENCE									
10.1 Seeking professional help	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
10.2 Seeking meaning in his experience of active service	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10.3 Finding new meaning in difficult past experiences	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
10.4 Sharing his emotions with his partner	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10.5 Taking pride in how far he has come (George)	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗

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Appendix 9: Four metathemes and 22 themes across four time categories

Before Active Service	Active Service	After Active Service	Now
<b>1. Before Active Service</b>	<b>2. Existential Confrontations</b>	<b>3. Changing</b>	<b>4. Growth and Resilience</b>
1.1 Seeking to escape	2.1 Expectations versus reality	3.1 Active service changed him	4.1 Breaking Down
1.2 Seeking a sense of self	2.2 Confronting mortality	3.2 Changing priorities	4.2 Seeking help
1.3 Seeking meaning and direction	2.3 Confronting freedom versus finitude	3.3 Overwhelming emotions	4.3 Seeking meaning
1.4 Seeking freedom and independence	2.4 Confronting meaninglessness and absurdity	3.4 Going to a dark place	4.4 Sharing
1.5 Seeking adventure	2.5 Worldview	3.5 Alienation	4.5 Pride in the journey
1.6 Seeking to belong		3.6 Withdrawal and isolation	